THE

GOSPEL ITS OWN WITNESS:

OR, THE

HOLY NATURE, AND DIVINE HARMONY

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

CONTRASTED WITH THE

IMMORALITY AND ABSURDITY

OF

DEISM.

BY ANDREW FULLER, D. D.

Laying his hand on the Bible, he would say, "There is true philosophy. This is the wisdom that speaks to the heart. A bad life is the only grand objection to this book." EARL OF ROCHESTER.

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PREFACE.

THE ſtruggle between religion and irreligion has exiſted in the world in all ages: and if there be two oppoſite intereſts which divide its inhabitants, the kingdom of Satan, and the kingdom of God, it is reaſonable to expect that the conteſt will continue till one of them be exterminated. The peaceful nature of Chriſtianity does not require that we ſhould make peace with its adverſaries, or ceaſe to repel their attacks, or even that we ſhould act merely on the defenſive: On the contrary, we are required to make uſe of thoſe weapons of the divine warfare with which we are furniſhed for the pulling down of ſtrong holds, caſting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itſelf againſt the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Chriſt.

The oppoſition of the preſent age has not been confined to the leſs important points of Chriſtianity, nor even to its firſt principles: Chriſtianity itſelf is treated as impoſture. The ſame things, it is true, have been frequently advanced, and as frequently repelled, in former ages; but the adverſaries of the goſpel of late, encouraged, it ſhould ſeem, by the temper of the times, have renewed the attack with redoubled vigour. One of their moſt popular writers, hoping to avail

himself of this circumstance, is pleased to entitle his performance The Age of Reason. *This writer is aware that flattery is one of the most successful means of gaining admission to the human mind; such a compliment, therefore, to the present age, was, doubtless, considered as a master-stroke of policy. Nor is Mr.* Paine *less obliging to himself than to his readers, but takes it for granted that the cause for which he pleads is that of reason and truth. The considerate reader, however, may remark, that those writers who are not ashamed to beg the question in the title page, are seldom the most liberal or impartial in the execution of the work.*

One thing which has contributed to the advantage of Infidelity is, the height to which political disputes have arisen, and the degree in which they have interested the passions and prejudices of mankind. Those who favour the sentiments of a set of men in one thing, will be in danger of thinking favourably of them in others; at least they will not be apt to view them in so bad a light as if they had been advanced by persons of different sentiments in other things as well as in religion. It is true there may be nothing more friendly to infidelity in the nature *of one political system than another, nothing that can justify professing Christians in accusing one another, merely on account of a difference of this kind, of favouring the interests of atheism and irreligion: nevertheless, it becomes those who think favourably of the political principles of infidels, to take heed lest they be insensibly drawn away to think lightly of religion. All the nations of the earth, and all the disputes on the best or worst mode of government, compared with this, are less than nothing and vanity.*

To this it may be added, that the eagerness with which men engage in political disputes, take which side they may,

is unfavourable to a zealous adherence to the gospel. Any mere worldly object, if it become the principal thing which occupies our thoughts and affections, will weaken our attachment to religion; and if once we become cool and indifferent to this, we are in the high road to infidelity. There are cases no doubt relating to civil government, in which it is our duty to act, and that with firmness: but to make such things the chief object of our attention, or the principal topic of our conversation, is both sinful and injurious. Many a promising character in the religious world has by these things been utterly ruined.

The writer of the following pages is not induced to offer them to the public eye from an apprehension that the Church of Christ is in danger. *Neither the downfal of Popery, nor the triumph of infidels, as though they had hereby overturned Christianity, have ever been to him the cause of a moment's uneasiness. If Christianity be of God, as he verily believes it to be, they cannot overthrow it. He must be possessed of but* little faith *who can tremble, though in a storm, for the safety of the vessel which contains his Lord and Master. There would be one argument less for the divinity of the Scriptures, if the same powers which gave existence to the Anti-Christian dominion had not been employed in taking it away.** *But though truth has nothing to fear, it does not follow that its friends should be inactive. The Lord confers an honour upon his servants in condescend-*

* The powers of Europe, signified by the Ten Horns, or Kings, into which the Roman empire should be divided, were to give their kingdoms to the Beast. They did so; and France particularly took the lead. The same powers, it is predicted, shall hate the Whore, and burn her flesh with fire. They have begun to do so; and in this business also France has taken the lead. Rev. xvii. 12, 13, 16, 17, 18.

ing to make use of their humble efforts in preserving and promoting his interest in the world. If the present attempt may be thus accepted and honoured by HIM *to whose name it is humbly dedicated, the writer will receive a rich reward.*

KETTERING,
October 10, 1799.

INTRODUCTION.

THE controverſies between believers and unbelievers are confined to a narrower ground than thoſe of profeſſed believers with one another. Scripture teſtimony, any farther than as it bears the character of truth, and approves itſelf to the conſcience, or is produced for the purpoſe of explaining the nature of genuine Chriſtianity, is here out of the queſtion. *Reaſon* is the common ground on which they muſt meet to decide their conteſts. On this ground, Chriſtian writers have ſucceſsfully cloſed with their antagoniſts; ſo much ſo, that of late ages, notwithſtanding all their boaſt of reaſon, not one in ten of them can be kept to the fair and honourable uſe of this weapon. On the contrary, they are driven to ſubſtitute dark inſinuation, low wit, profane ridicule, and groſs abuſe. Such were the weapons of *Shafteſbury*, *Tindal*, *Morgan*, *Bolingbroke*, *Voltaire*, *Hume*, and *Gibbon*; and ſuch are the weapons of the author of *The Age of Reaſon*.—Amongſt various well-written performances in anſwer to their ſeveral productions, the reader may ſee a conciſe and able refutation of the greater part of them in *Leland's Review of the Deiſtical Writers*.

It is not my deſign to go over the various topics uſually diſcuſſed in this controverſy, but to ſelect a ſingle one, which I conceive has not been ſo fully attended to but that it may yet be conſidered with advantage. The *internal evidence* which Chriſtianity poſſeſſes, particularly in reſpect to its holy nature,

and divine harmony, will be the subject of the present inquiry.

Mr. Paine, after the example of many others, endeavours to discredit the Scriptures by representing the number of hands through which they have passed, and the uncertainty of the historical evidence by which they are supported. "It is a matter altogether of uncertainty to us, he says, whether such of the writings "as now appear under the names of the Old and New "Testament, are in the same state in which those collectors say they found them; or whether they added, "altered, abridged, or dressed them up."* It is a good work, which many writers have undertaken, to prove the validity of the Christian history; and to show that we have as good evidence for the truth of the great facts which it relates, as we have for the truth of any ancient events whatever.† But if in addition to this it can be proved that the Scriptures contain internal characteristics of divinity, or that they carry in them the evidence of their authenticity, this will at once answer all objections from the supposed uncertainty of historical evidence.

Historians inform us of a certain valuable medicine, called *Mithridate*, an antidote to poison, and which is still in reputation. It is said to have been "invented "by Mithridates, king of Pontus; that the receipt of "it was found in a cabinet, written with his own "hand, and was carried to Rome by Pompey; that it "was translated into verse by Democrates, a famous "physician; and that it was afterwards translated by "Galen, from whom we have it."‡ A modern caviller might take it into his head to object to the au-

* Age of Reason, Part I. p. 10, 11.

† Lardner, Simpson, and others.

‡ Chambers' Dict. *Mithridate.*

thenticity of this hiſtory; he might allege that the preparation has paſſed through ſo many hands, and that there is ſo much hear-ſay and uncertainty attending it, that no dependence can be placed upon it, and that it had better be rejected from our Materia Medica. But of what account would ſuch an objection be in the eſtimation of mankind? They would aſk, *Has it not been tried, and found to be effectual; and that in a great variety of inſtances?* Such are Mr. Paine's objections to the Bible; and ſuch is the anſwer that may be given him.

This language is not confined to infidel writers. Mr. Locke ſpeaks of what he calls "Traditional Rev-"elation," or Revelation as we have it, in ſuch a manner as to convey the idea, that we have no evidence of the Scriptures being the word of God, but from a ſucceſſion of witneſſes having told us ſo.* But I conceive theſe ſacred writings may contain ſuch internal evidence of their being what they profeſs to be, as that it might with equal reaſon be doubted whether the world was created by the power of God, as whether they were written by the inſpiration of his Spirit; and if ſo, our dependence is not upon mere tradition.

It is true, the Scriptures having been conveyed to us through the medium of man, the work muſt neceſſarily in ſome reſpects have been humanized; yet there may be ſufficient marks of divinity upon it to render it evident to every candid mind that it is of God.

We may call the Moſaic account of the creation, a tradition, and may be ſaid to know through this medium that the heavens and the earth are the productions of divine power. But it is not through this

* Human Und. B. IV. Chap. xviii.

medium only that we know it: the heavens and the earth carry in them evident marks of their divine original. These works of the Almighty speak for themselves, and in language which none but those who are wilfully deaf can misunderstand. *Their sound is gone forth throughout all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.* Were any man to pretend that its being a matter of Revelation, and to us merely traditional Revelation, that God made the heavens and the earth, and therefore that a degree of uncertainty must necessarily attend it; he would be reminded that the thing itself carried in it its own evidence. Let it be candidly considered whether the same may not be said of the Holy Scriptures. They will *admit* of historical defence; but they do not require it. Their contents, come through whose hands they may, prove them to be of God. It was on this principle that the gospel was proclaimed in the form of a *testimony*. The primitive preachers were not required by him who sent them to prove their doctrine in the manner that philosophers were wont to establish a proposition; but to *declare the counsel of God*, and leave it. In delivering their message, they *commended themselves to every man's conscience, in the sight of God.*

It is no objection to this statement of things that the Scriptures are not embraced by every man, whatever be the disposition of his mind. This is a property that no divine production whatever possesses; and to require it is equally unreasonable as to insist that for a book to be perfectly legible, it must be capable of being read by those who shut their eyes upon it. Mr. Paine holds up the advantages of the book of nature, in order to disparage that of Scripture, and informs us, that "no deist can doubt whether the

"works of nature be God's works." An admirable proof this, that we have arrived at the age of reaſon! Can no *Atheiſt* doubt it? I might as well ſay, no Chriſtian doubts the truth of the Scriptures: the one proves juſt as much as the other. A prejudiced mind diſcerns nothing of divine beauty either in nature or Scripture; yet each may include the moſt indubitable evidence of being wrought by the finger of God.

If Chriſtianity can be proved to be a religion that inſpires the love of God and man, yea, and the only religion in the world that does ſo; if it endues the mind of him that embraces it with a principle of juſtice, meekneſs, chaſtity, and goodneſs, and even gives a tone to the morals of ſociety at large, it will then appear to carry its evidence along with it. The effects which it produces will be its letters of recommendation, written *not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of ſtone, but in fleſhly tables of the heart.* Moreover, if Chriſtianity can be proved to be in harmony with itſelf, correſpondent with obſervation and experience, and conſiſtent with the cleareſt dictates of ſober reaſon, it will further appear to carry in it its own evidence: come through whoſe hands it may, it will evince itſelf to be what it profeſſes to be, a religion from God.

I will only add in this place, that the Chriſtianity here defended is not Chriſtianity as it is corrupted by popiſh ſuperſtition, lowered by philoſophical ingenuity, or as interwoven with national eſtabliſhments, for the accompliſhment of ſecular purpoſes; but as it is taught in the New Teſtament, and practiſed by ſincere Chriſtians. There is no doubt but that in many inſtances Chriſtianity has been adopted by worldly men, even by infidels themſelves, for the purpoſes of

promoting their political designs. Finding the bulk of the people inclined to the Christian religion under some particular form, and attached to certain leading persons amongst them who sustained the character of teachers; they have considered it as a piece of good policy to give this religion an establishment, and these teachers a share in the government. It is thus that religion, to its great dishonour, has been converted into an engine of state. The politician may be pleased with his success, and the teacher with his honours, and even the people be so far misled as to love to have it so; but the mischief resulting from it to religion is incalculable. Even where such establishments have arisen from piety, they have not failed to corrupt the minds of Christians from the simplicity which is in Christ. It was by these means that the church at an early period, from being the bride of Christ, gradually degenerated to a harlot, and in the end became the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth. The good that is done in such communities is not in consequence of their peculiar ecclesiastical constitution, but in spite of it: it arises from the virtue of individuals, which operates notwithstanding the disadvantages of their situation.

These are the things that afford a handle to unbelievers. They seldom choose to attack Christianity as it is drawn in the sacred writings, and exemplified in the lives of real Christians, who stand at a distance from worldly parade, political struggles, or state intrigues; but as it is corrupted and abused by worldly men. Mr. Paine racks his imagination to make out a resemblance betwixt the heathen mythology and Christianity. While he is going over the ground of Christianity, as instituted by Christ and his apostles, the resemblance is faint indeed. There are only two

points, in which he even pretends to find an agreement; and these are formed by his misrepresenting the Scriptures. The heathen deities were said to be *celestially begotten*; and Christ is called *the Son of God*.* The heathens had a *plurality* of deities, even twenty or thirty thousand; and Christianity has reduced them to three! It is easy to see that this is ground not suited to Mr. Paine's purpose; he therefore hastens to corrupted Christianity, and here he finds plenty of materials. "The statue of Mary, he says, succeeded "the statue of Diana of Ephesus. The deification of "heroes changed into the canonization of saints. "The mythologists had gods for every thing. The "Christian mythologists had saints for every thing. "The Church became as crowded with the one, as "the Pantheon had with the other, and Rome was "the place of both."† Very true, Mr. Paine; but you are not so ignorant as to mistake this for Christianity. Had you been born and educated in Italy, or Spain, you might have been excused in calling this "the Christian theory;" but to write in this manner, with your advantages, is disingenuous. Such conduct would have disgraced any cause but yours. It is capable, however, of some improvement. It teaches us to defend nothing but the truth as it is in Jesus. It also affords presumptive evidence in its favour; for if Christianity itself were false, there is little doubt but that you, or some of your fellow labourers, would be able to prove it so; and this would turn greatly to your account. Your neglecting this, and directing your artillery chiefly against its corruptions and abuses,

* To give a colour to this statement, he is obliged to affirm, that *only Gentiles believed Jesus to be the Son of God.* What a palpable falsehood!

† Age of Reason, Part I. p. 5.

betrays a conſciouſneſs that the thing itſelf is, if not invulnerable, yet not ſo eaſy of attack. If Chriſtianity had really been a relic of heatheniſm, as you ſuggeſt, there is little reaſon to think that you would have ſo ſtrenuouſly oppoſed it.

THE

GOSPEL ITS OWN WITNESS, &c.

PART I.

IN WHICH THE HOLY NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IS CONTRASTED WITH THE IMMORALITY OF DEISM.

THE greateſt enemies of Chriſtianity would ſtill be thought friendly to morality, and will plead for it as neceſſary to the well-being of mankind. However immoral men may be in their practice, and to whatever lengths they may proceed in extenuating particular vices; yet they cannot plead for immorality in the groſs. A ſober, upright, humble, chaſte, and generous character is allowed on all hands to be preferable to one that is profligate, treacherous, proud, unchaſte, or cruel. Such indeed is the ſenſe which men poſſeſs of right and wrong, that whenever they attempt to diſparage the former, or vindicate the latter, they are reduced to the neceſſity of covering each with a falſe diſguiſe. They cannot traduce good *as good*, or juſtify evil *as evil*. The love of God muſt be called *fanaticiſm*, and benevolence to men *methodiſm*, or ſome ſuch opprobrious name, before they can run them down. Theft, cruelty, and murder, on the other hand, muſt aſſume the names of *wiſdom* and *good policy*, ere a plea can be ſet up in their defence. Thus were the arguments for the abolition of the ſlave-trade anſwered, and in this manner was that iniquitous traffic defended in the Britiſh Parliament. Doubtleſs there is a *wo* hanging over the heads of thoſe men who thus *called*

evil good, and good evil; nevertheleſs, we ſee, even in their conduct, the amiableneſs of righteouſneſs, and the impoſſibility of fairly oppoſing it.

CHAP. I.

Chriſtianity reveals a God, glorious in holineſs: but Deiſm, though it acknowledges a God, yet denies or overlooks his moral character.

THERE are certain perfections which all who acknowledge a God, agree in attributing to him: ſuch are thoſe of wiſdom, power, immutability, &c. Theſe, by Chriſtian divines, are uſually termed his *natural* perfections. There are others, which no leſs evidently belong to Deity, ſuch as goodneſs, juſtice, veracity, &c. all which may be expreſſed in one word, *holineſs*; and theſe are uſually termed his *moral* perfections. Both natural and moral attributes tend to diſplay the glory of the Divine Character, but eſpecially the latter. Wiſdom and power in the Supreme Being render him a proper object of admiration; but juſtice, veracity, and goodneſs attract our love. No being is beloved for his greatneſs, but for his goodneſs. Moral excellence is the higheſt glory of any intelligent being, created or uncreated. Without this, wiſdom would be ſubtilty, power tyranny, and immutability the ſame thing as being unchangeably wicked.

We account it the glory of Revelation, that while it diſplays the natural perfections of God in a way ſuperior to any thing that has been called religion, it exhibits his moral excellencies in a manner peculiar to itſelf. It was with good reaſon that Moſes affirmed in behalf of Iſrael, *Their rock is not as our Rock, our enemies themſelves being judges.* The God or Rock of Iſrael is conſtantly deſcribed as a Being glorious in holineſs, and as requiring pure and holy worſhip. *The*

Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and in truth—The Lord our God is holy—Holy and reverend is his name—Glory ye in his holy name—And one cried to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory—He is of purer eyes than to behold evil; and cannot look on iniquity—A God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he. Is any thing like this to be found in the writings of the ancient heathens? No. The generality of their deities were the patrons of vice, and their worship was accompanied with the foulest abominations that could disgrace the nature of man. Justice, benevolence, and veracity were not considered as necessary in any part of their religion; and a large proportion of it consisted in drunkenness, lewdness, and the offering up of human sacrifices.

The object of Christian adoration is JEHOVAH, the God of Israel; whose character for holiness, justice, and goodness is displayed in the doctrines and precepts of the gospel in a more affecting light than by any of the preceding dispensations. But who or what is the god of deists? It is true, they have been shamed out of the polytheism of the heathens. They have reduced their thirty thousand deities into one; but what is his character? What attributes do they ascribe to him? For any thing that appears in their writings, he is as far from the holy, the just, and the good, as those of their heathen predecessors. They enjoy a pleasure, it is allowed, in contemplating the productions of wisdom and power; but as to holiness, it is foreign from their inquiries: a holy God does not appear to be suited to their wishes.

Lord Bolingbroke acknowledges a God, but is for reducing all his attributes to *wisdom* and *power*; blaming divines for distinguishing between his physical and moral attributes; asserting that "we cannot ascribe "goodness and justice to God, according to our ideas "of them, nor argue with any certainty about them; "and that it is absurd to deduce moral obligations

"from the moral attributes of God, or to pretend to "imitate him in those attributes."*

Voltaire admits "a supreme, eternal, incomprehen- "sible intelligence;" but passes over his moral character.†

Mr. Paine says, "I believe in one God, and no "more;"‡ and in the course of his work ascribes to him the natural perfections of *wisdom* and *power;* but is very sparing in what he says of his moral excellence, of his being the moral Governor of the world, and of man's being an accountable creature. He affects indeed to be shocked at the impurity of the ideas and expressions of the Bible, and to feel for "the honour "of his Creator, in having such a book called after "his name."§ This is the only passage that I recollect, in which he expresses any concern for the moral character of God; and whether this would have appeared, but for the sake of giving an edge to reproach, let the reader judge.

How are we to account for these writers thus denying or overlooking the moral character of the Deity, but by supposing that a *holy* God is not suited to their inclinations? If we bear a sincere regard to moral excellence, we shall regard every being in proportion as he appears to possess it; and if we consider the Divine Being as possessing it supremely, and as the source of it to all other beings, it will be natural for us to love him with supreme affection, and all other beings in subserviency to him. And if we love him supremely on account of his moral character, it will be no less natural to take pleasure in contemplating him under that character.

On the other hand, if we be enemies to moral excellence, it will render every being who possesses it unlovely in our eyes. Virtuous or holy characters may indeed command our *respect* and even *admiration;*

* See Leland's Review, Let. xxiii.

† Ignor. Philos. Nos. xv. xvi. xviii.

‡ Age of Reason, Part I. p. 1. § Ibid, p. 16.

but will not attract our *affection*. Whatever regard we may bear to them, it will not be on account of their virtue, but of other qualities of which they may be poſſeſſed. Virtuous characters may be alſo wiſe and mighty; and we may admire their ingenuity, be delighted with their ſplendour, and take pleaſure in viſiting them, that we may inſpect their curioſities: but in ſuch caſes the more things of a moral nature are kept at a diſtance, the more agreeable will be our viſit. Much the ſame may be ſaid of the Supreme Being. If we be enemies to moral excellence, God, as a holy being, will poſſeſs no lovelineſs in our eyes. We may admire him with that kind of admiration which is paid to a great genius, and may feel a pleaſure in tracing the grandeur and ingenuity of his operations; but the farther his moral character is kept out of ſight, the more agreeable it will be to us.

Lord Shafteſbury, not contented with overlooking, attempts to ſatirize the ſcripture repreſentations of the divine character. "One would think," he ſays, "it "were eaſy to underſtand that provocation and of- "fence, anger, revenge, jealouſy in point of honour or "power, love of fame, glory, and the like, belong on- "ly to limited beings, and are neceſſarily excluded a "Being which is perfect and univerſal."* That many things are attributed to the Divine Being in a figurative ſtyle, ſpeaking merely after the manner of men, and that they are ſo underſtood by Chriſtians, Lord Shafteſbury muſt have well known. We do not think it lawful, however, ſo to explain away theſe expreſſions as to conſider the Great Supreme as incapable of being offended with ſin and ſinners, as deſtitute of pleaſure or diſpleaſure, or as unconcerned about his own glory, the exerciſe of which involves the general good of the univerſe. A being of this deſcription would be neither loved nor feared, but would become the object of univerſal contempt.

* Characteriſtics, Vol. I. § V.

It is no part of the imperfection of our nature that we are susceptible of provocation and offence, of anger, of jealousy, and of a just regard to our own honour. Lord Shaftesbury himself would have ridiculed the man, and still more the magistrate, that should have been incapable of these properties on certain occasions. They are planted in our nature by the Divine Being, and are adapted to answer valuable purposes. If they be perverted and abused to sordid ends, which is too frequently the case, this does not alter their nature, or lessen their utility. What would Lord Shaftesbury have thought of a magistrate, who should have witnessed a train of assassinations and murders without being in the least *offended* at them, or *angry* with the perpetrators, or inclined to take *vengeance* on them for the public good? What would he think of a British House of Commons, who should exercise no *jealousy* over the encroachments of a minister, or of a king of Great-Britain who should suffer, with perfect indifference, his just authority to be treated with contempt?

But we are *limited* beings, and are therefore in danger of having our just rights invaded. True; and though God be unlimited, and so in no danger of being deprived of his essential glory, yet he may lose his just authority *in the esteem of creatures;* and were this to take place universally, the whole creation would be a scene of anarchy and misery. But we understand Lord Shaftesbury. He wishes to compliment his Maker out of all his moral excellencies. He has no objection to a God, provided he be one after his own heart; one who shall pay no such regard to human affairs as to call men to account for their ungodly deeds. If he thought the Creator of the world to bear such a character, it is no wonder that he should speak of him with what he calls "good humour, or pleasantry."* In speaking of such a God, he can, as Mr. Hume expresses it, "feel more at ease" than if he conceived of him as he is characterized in the Holy Scriptures. But

* Characteristics, Vol. I. § III.

let men beware how they play with ſuch ſubjects. Their conceptions do not alter the nature of God: and however they ſuffer themſelves to trifle now, they may find, in the end, that there is not only a GOD, but *a God that judgeth in the earth.*

CHAP. II.

Chriſtianity teaches us to acknowledge God, and to devote ourſelves to his ſervice: but Deiſm, though it confeſſes one Supreme Being, yet refuſes to worſhip him.

IF there be a God, he ought to be worſhipped. This is a principle which no man will be able to eradicate from his boſom, or even to ſuppreſs, but at great labour and expenſe. The Scriptures, it is well known, both inculcate and inſpire the worſhip of God.—Their language is, *O, come let us ſing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noiſe to the Rock of our ſalvation. Let us come before his preſence with thankſgiving, and make a joyful noiſe unto him with pſalms—O come, let us worſhip and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.—Give unto the Lord glory and ſtrength: give unto the Lord the glory due to his name. Bring an offering, and come into his courts.—O worſhip the Lord in the beauty of holineſs: fear before him all the earth.—Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name; make known his deeds among the people—glory ye in his holy name; let the heart of them rejoice that ſeek the Lord. Seek the Lord, and his ſtrength; ſeek his face continually.*

The *ſpirit* alſo which the Scriptures inſpire is favourable to divine worſhip. The grand leſſon which they teach is *love;* and love to God delights to expreſs itſelf in acts of obedience, adoration, ſupplication, and praiſe. The natural language of a heart well affected to God, is—*I will call upon him as long as I live—Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul, and all that is within me bleſs his holy*

name—Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and ſupplication, with thankſgiving, let your requeſts be made known unto God.

Is it thus with our adverſaries? They ſpeak indeed of "true and fabulous theology," and of "true and "falſe religion;" and often talk of "adoring" the Supreme Being. But if there be no true religion amongſt Chriſtians, where are we to look for it? Surely, not amongſt deiſts. Their "adorations" ſeem to be a kind of exerciſes much reſembling the benevolent acts of certain perſons, who are ſo extremely averſe to oſtentation, that nobody knows of their being charitable but themſelves.

Mr. Paine profeſſes to "believe in the equality of "man, and that religious duties conſiſt in *doing juſtice*, "*loving mercy, and*"—and what? I thought to be ſure he had been going to add, *walking humbly with God.* But I was miſtaken. Mr. Paine ſupplies the place of walking humbly with God, by adding, "and endeav-"ouring to make our fellow-creatures happy."* Some people would have thought that this was included in *doing juſtice, and loving mercy:* but Mr. Paine had rather uſe words without meaning, than write in favour of godlineſs. *Walking humbly with God* is not comprehended in the liſt of his "religious duties." The very phraſe offends him. It is that to him, in quoting Scripture, which a non-conductor is to the electrical fluid: it cauſes him to fly off in an oblique direction; and, rather than ſay any thing on ſo offenſive a ſubject, to deal in unmeaning tautology.

Mr. Paine not only avoids the mention of *walking humbly with God*, but attempts to load the practice itſelf with the fouleſt abuſe.† He does not conſider himſelf as "an out-caſt, a beggar, or a worm;" he does not approach his Maker through a Mediator; he conſiders "Redemption as a fable," and himſelf as ſtanding in an honourable ſituation with regard to his relation to Deity. Some of this may be true; but not

* Age of Reaſon, Part I. p. 2. † Ibid, Part I. p. 21.

the whole. The latter part is only a piece of religious gaſconade. If Mr. Paine really thinks ſo well of his ſituation as he pretends, the belief of an hereafter would not render him "the ſlave of terror."* But, allowing the whole to be true, it proves nothing. A high conceit of one's ſelf is no proof of excellence. If he chooſe to reſt upon this foundation, he muſt abide the conſequence: but he had better have forborne to calumniate others. What is it that has tranſported this child of reaſon into a paroxyſm of fury againſt devout people? By what ſpirit is he inſpired in pouring forth ſuch a torrent of ſlander? Why is it that he muſt accuſe their humility of "ingratitude," their grief of "affectation," and their prayers of being "dictatorial" to the Almighty? *Cain hated his brother; and wherefore hated he him? becauſe his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* Prayer and devotion are things which Mr. Paine ſhould have let alone, as being out of his province. By attempting, however, to run them down, he has borne witneſs to the devotion of Chriſtians, and fulfilled what is written in a book which he affects to deſpiſe, *Speaking evil of the things which he underſtands not.*

To admit a God, and then refuſe to worſhip him, is a modern and inconſiſtent practice. It is a dictate of reaſon as well as of Revelation: *If the Lord be God, worſhip him; and if Baal, worſhip him.* It never was made a queſtion, whether the God in whom we believe ſhould receive our adorations. All nations in all ages paid religious homage to the reſpective deities, or ſuppoſed deities in which they believed. Modern unbelievers are the only men who have deviated from this practice. How this is to be accounted for, is a ſubject worthy of inquiry. To me it appears as follows:—

In former times, when men were weary of the worſhip of the true God, they exchanged it for that of idols. I know of no account of the origin of idolatry ſo rational as that which is given by Revelation. *Men*

* Age of Reaſon, Part II. near the end.

did not like to retain God in their knowledge; therefore they were given up to a mind void of judgment; to change the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beaſts, and creeping things; and to defile their bodies by every ſpecies of lewdneſs and wickedneſs.* It was thus with the people who came to inhabit the country of Samaria after the Iſraelites were carried captives into Aſſyria. At firſt they ſeemed deſirous to know and fear the God of Iſrael: but when they came to be informed of his holy character, and what kind of worſhip he required, they preſently diſcovered their diſlike. They pretended to fear him; but it was mere pretence; for every nation *made gods of their own.*† Now gods of their own making would doubtleſs be characterized according to their own mind; they would be patrons of ſuch vices as their makers wiſhed to indulge; gods whom they could approach without fear, and in addreſſing them, "be more at eaſe," as Mr. Hume ſays, than in addreſſing the one living and true God; gods, in fine, the worſhip of whom might be accompanied with banquetings, revellings, drunkenneſs, and lewdneſs. Theſe, I conceive, were the exerciſes, rather than the mere falling down to an idol, that intereſted the paſſions of the worſhippers. Theſe were the exerciſes that ſeduced the ungodly part of the Iſraelitiſh nation to an imitation of the heathens. They found it extremely diſagreeable to be conſtantly employed in the worſhip of a *holy* God. Such worſhip would awe their ſpirits, damp their pleaſures, and reſtrain their inclinations. It is not ſurpriſing therefore that they ſhould be continually departing from the worſhip of Jehovah, and leaning towards that which was more congenial with their propenſities. But the ſituation of modern unbelievers is ſingular. Things are ſo circumſtanced with them that they cannot worſhip the gods which they prefer. They never fail to diſcover a ſtrong partiality in favour of heathens; but

* Rom. i. † 2 Kings, xvii.

they have not the face to practiſe or defend their abſurd idolatries. The doctrine of one living and true God has appeared in the world, by means of the preaching of the goſpel, with ſuch a blaze of evidence, that it has forced itſelf into the minds of men, whatever has been the temper of their hearts. The ſtupid idolatry of paſt ages is exploded. Chriſtianity has driven it out of Europe. The conſequence is, great numbers are obliged to acknowledge a God whom they cannot find in their hearts to worſhip.

If the light that is gone abroad in the earth would permit the rearing of temples to Venus, or Bacchus, or any of the rabble of heathen deities, there is little doubt but that modern unbelievers would in great numbers become their devotees: but ſeeing they cannot have a god whoſe worſhip ſhall accord with their inclinations, they ſeem determined not to worſhip at all. And to come off with as good a grace as the affair will admit, they compliment the Deity out of his ſovereign prerogatives; profeſſing to "love him "for his giving them exiſtence, and all their proper-"ties, without *intereſt*, and without ſubjecting them "to any thing but their own nature."*

The introduction of ſo large a portion of heathen mythology into the ſongs, and other entertainments of the ſtage, ſufficiently ſhews the bias of people's hearts. The houſe of God gives them no pleaſure: but the reſurrection of the obſcenities, intrigues, and bacchanalian revels of the old heathens, affords them exquiſite delight. In a country where Chriſtian worſhip abounds, this is plainly ſaying, 'What a wearineſs is 'it! O that it were no more! ſince however we can-'not introduce the worſhip of the gods, we will neg-'lect all worſhip, and celebrate the praiſes of our fa-'vourite deities in another form.' In a country where deiſm has gained the aſcendancy, this principle is carried ſtill farther. Its language there is, 'Seeing we 'cannot, for ſhame, worſhip any other than the one

* Ignor. Philoſ. No. XXIV.

'living and true God, let us aboliſh the day of wor-
'ſhip, and ſubſtitute in its place one day in ten, which
'ſhall be devoted chiefly to theatrical entertainments,
'in which we can introduce as much heatheniſm as
'we pleaſe.'

Mr. Hume acknowledges the *juſtice* of conſidering the Deity as infinitely ſuperior to mankind; but he repreſents it at the ſame time as very generally attended with unpleaſant effects, and magnifies the advantages of having gods which are only a little ſuperior to ourſelves. "While the Deity, he ſays, is rep-
"reſented as infinitely ſuperior to mankind, this be-
"lief, though altogether juſt, is apt, when joined with
"ſuperſtitious terrors, to ſink the human mind into
"the loweſt ſubmiſſion and abaſement, and to repre-
"ſent the monkiſh virtues of mortification, penance,
"humility, and paſſive ſuffering, as the only qualities
"which are acceptable to him. But where the gods
"are conceived to be only a little ſuperior to mankind,
"and to have been many of them advanced from that
"inferior rank, we are more at our eaſe in our ad-
"dreſſes to them, and may even without profaneneſs
"aſpire ſometimes to a rivalſhip and emulation of
"them. Hence activity, ſpirit, courage, magnanimi-
"ty, love of liberty, and all the virtues which aggran-
"dize a people."*

It is eaſy to perceive from this paſſage, that though Mr. Hume acknowledges the *juſtice* of conceiving of a God infinitely ſuperior to us, yet his *inclination* is the other way. In a nation at leaſt, the bulk of which will be ſuppoſed to be inclined to ſuperſtition, it is better, according to his reaſoning, and more friendly to virtue, to promote the worſhip of a number of imaginary deities, than of the one only living and true God. Thus *the fool ſaith in his heart, no God!*

The ſum of the whole is this, modern unbelievers are deiſts in theory, pagans in inclination, and atheiſts in practice.

* Diſſert. on the Nat. Hiſt of Rel. § X.

If deists loved the one only living and true God, they would delight in worshipping him; for love cannot be inoperative; and the only possible way for it to operate towards an infinitely glorious and all-perfect Being, is by worshipping his name, and obeying his will. If Mr. Paine really felt for "the honour of his "Creator," as he affects to do,* he would mourn in secret for all the great wickedness which he has committed against him; he would lie in the dust before him, not merely as "an outcast, a beggar, and a "worm," but as a sinner, deserving his eternal displeasure. He would be glad of a Mediator, through whom he might approach his offended Creator; and would consider redemption through his blood not as "a fable," but a divine reality, including all his salvation, and all his desire. Yes, he himself would "turn "devout;" and it would be said of him as of Saul of Tarsus, *Behold he prayeth!* Nor would his prayers, though importunate, be "dictatorial," or his grief "affected." On the contrary, he would look on Him whom he hath pierced, and mourn, as one mourneth for an only son; and be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. But these are things pertaining to *godliness;* things, alas for him, the mention of which is sufficient to inflame his mind with malignity, and provoke him to the most outrageous and abusive language.

CHAP. III.

The Christian standard of morality is enlarged, and free from impurity: but deism confines our obligations to those duties which respect our own species, and greatly palliates vice with regard to a breach even of them.

PERSONS who profess the strictest regard to the rule of duty, and carry the extent of it to the highest pitch, may, it is allowed, be insincere, and contradict,

* Age of Reason, Part I. p. 16.

by their practice, what they advance in their profeſſions. But thoſe whoſe ideas of virtue are low and contracted, and who embrace every opportunity to reconcile the vices of the world with its ſacred precepts, cannot poſſibly be accounted any other than its enemies.

That which the Scriptures call *holineſs*, *ſpirituality*, &c. as much ſurpaſſes every thing that goes under the names of morality and virtue amongſt unbelievers, as a living man ſurpaſſes a painting, or even a rude and imperfect daubing. If in this controverſy I have uſed theſe terms to expreſs the ſcriptural ideas, it is not becauſe in their ordinary acceptation they are equal to the purpoſe, but for the ſake of meeting unbelievers upon their own ground. I have a right however to underſtand by them, thoſe diſpoſitions of the mind, whatever they be, which are *right, fit, or amiable;* and ſo explained, I undertake to prove that the morality and virtue inculcated by the goſpel, is enlarged, and free from impurity, while that which is taught by its adverſaries is the reverſe.

It is a diſtinguiſhing property of the Bible, that all its precepts aim directly at the heart. It never goes about to form the mere exterior of man. To merely external duties it is a ſtranger. It forms the lives of men no otherwiſe than by forming their diſpoſitions. It never addreſſes itſelf to their vanity, ſelfiſhneſs, or any other corrupt propenſity. You are not preſſed to conſider what men will think of you, or how it will affect your temporal intereſt; but what is right, and what is neceſſary to your eternal well-being. If you comply with its precepts, you muſt *be*, and not merely *ſeem to be*. It is the heart that is required; and all the different preſcribed forms of worſhip and obedience are but ſo many modifications, or varied expreſſions of it.

Is any thing like this to be found in the writings of deiſts? No. Their deity does not ſeem to take cognizance of the heart. According to them, "there

"is no merit or crime in intention."* Their morality only goes to form the exterior of man. It allows the utmoſt ſcope for wicked deſires, provided they be not carried into execution to the injury of ſociety.

The morality which the Scriptures inculcate is ſummed up in theſe few words: *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy ſoul, with all thy mind, with all thy ſtrength; and thy neighbour as thyſelf.* This ſingle principle is competent to the government of all intelligent nature. It is a band that would hold together the whole rational creation; and diffuſe peace, order and happineſs wherever it exiſted.

If mankind loved God ſupremely, there would be no idolatry upon earth, nor any of its attendant abominations; no profaning the name of God, nor making a gain of godlineſs; no oppoſing, corrupting, perverting, nor abuſing the truth; no perjuries, nor hypocriſies; no deſpiſing of thoſe that are good; no arrogance, ingratitude, pride, nor ſelf-complacency under the ſmiles of Providence; and no murmuring, heart-riſing, ſullenneſs, nor ſuicide under its frowns. Love would render it their meat and drink to fear, honour, and obey him, and induce them to take every thing well at his hands.

And if they loved their fellow-creatures as themſelves, for his ſake, there would be no wars, rivalſhips, antipathies, nor breach of treaties between nations; no envyings, ſtrifes, wrongs, ſlanders, duels, litigations, nor intrigues between neighbours; no flattering complaiſance, nor perſecuting bitterneſs in religion; no deceit, fraud, nor over-reachings in trade; no tyranny, venality, haughtineſs, nor oppreſſion among the great; no envy, diſcontent, diſaffection, cabals, nor evil-deviſings among common people; no murders, robberies, thefts, burglaries, nor brothels, in city or country; no cruelty in parents or maſters; no ingratitude nor diſobedience in children or ſervants; no

* Volney's Law of Nature, p. 18.

unkindneſs, treachery, nor implacable reſentments between friends; no illicit connexions between the ſexes; no infidelities, jealouſies, nor bitter contentions in families; in ſhort, none of thoſe ſtreams of death, one or more of which flow through every vein of ſociety, and poiſon its enjoyments.

Such is the principle and rule of Chriſtian morality; and what has deiſm to ſubſtitute in its place? Can it find a ſuccedaneum for love? No: but it propoſes the love of *ourſelves* inſtead of the love of God. Lord Bolingbroke reſolves all morality into *ſelf-love* as its firſt principle. "We love ourſelves," ſays he, "we "love our families, we love the particular ſocieties to "which we belong; and our benevolence extends at "laſt to the whole race of mankind. Like ſo many "different vortices, the centre of all is ſelf-love."* Such alſo are the principles of Volney.

Could this diſpoſition be admitted as a proper ſource of moral action, the world would certainly not be wanting in morality. All men poſſeſs at leaſt the *principle* of it, whether they carry it to the extent which Lord Bolingbroke propoſes, or not; for though ſome may err in the choice of their end, and others in the means of obtaining it; yet no man was ever ſo wanting in regard to himſelf, as intentionally to purſue his own injury. But if it ſhould prove that to render ſelf-love the ſource of moral action is the ſame thing as for every individual to treat himſelf as the Supreme Being; and, therefore, that this ſaid ſelf-love, inſtead of being a ſource of virtue, is of the very eſſence of vice, and the ſource of all the miſchief in the univerſe, conſequences may follow of a very different complexion.

To ſubordinate ſelf-love I have no objection. It occupies a place in the Chriſtian Standard of Morality, being the meaſure of that love which we owe to our fellow-creatures. And as the univerſal love which we owe to them does not hinder but that ſome of

* Poſthum. Works, Vol. V. p. 82.

them, by reaſon of their ſituation, or peculiar relation to us, may require a larger portion of our regard than others, it is the ſame with reſpect to ourſelves. Our own concerns are our own immediate charge; and thoſe which are of the greateſt importance, ſuch as the concerns of our ſouls, undoubtedly require a proportionate degree of attention. But all this does not affect the preſent ſubject of inquiry. It is our *ſupreme*, and not our ſubordinate regard, that will ever be the ſource of action.

I take it for granted, that it is the intention of every good government, human or divine, to *unite* its ſubjects, and not to ſet them at variance. But there can be no union without a common object of regard. Either a character whom all love and venerate, or an end which all purſue, or both, is that to a community which a head-ſtone is to an arch; nor can they keep together without it. It is thus that the love of God holds creation together. He is that lovely character to whom all holy intelligences bear ſupreme affection; and the diſplay of his glory, in the univerſal triumph of truth and righteouſneſs, is that end which they all purſue. Thus united in their grand object, they cannot but feel a union of heart with one another, ariſing from what is common to every other voluntary union, a congeniality of ſentiments and purſuits.

But if our ſupreme affection terminate on ourſelves, and no being, created or uncreated, be regarded but for our own ſakes, it is manifeſt there can be no union beyond the ſphere in which other beings become voluntarily ſubſervient to our wiſhes. The ſupreme Being, if our plan do not comport with his, will be continually thwarting us; and ſo we ſhall be always at variance with *him*. And as to created beings, thoſe individuals whom we deſire to be ſubſervient to our wiſhes, having the ſame right, and the ſame inclination to require that we ſhould be ſubſervient to theirs, will alſo be continually thwarting us; and ſo we ſhall always be at variance with *them*. In ſhort, nothing

but an endless succession of discord and confusion can be the consequence. Every one setting up for pre-eminence, every one must, of course, contribute to the general state of anarchy and misery which will pervade the community. Such is, in fact, the state of this apostate world; and, but for Divine Providence, which, for wise ends, balances all human affairs, by causing one set of evils to counteract the influence of another, it must be overset by its own disorders.

To regard every other being, created or uncreated, only for our own sakes, is supreme self-love; and instead of being a source of virtue, is itself abominable, and the source of all the mischief and misery in the universe. All the evils just enumerated are to be traced to this principle as their common parent; nor is there any ground of hope that it will ever produce effects of a different nature. Some persons have talked much of "self-love *ripening* into benevolence." Had it been said *malevolence*, it had been nearer the truth; for it is contrary to all experience, that any thing should change its nature by becoming more mature. No, a child in knowledge may discern that if ever genuine benevolence exist in the breast of an individual, or extend its healing wings over a bleeding world, it must be by the subversion of this principle, and by the prevalence of that religion which teaches us to love God supremely, ourselves subordinately, and our fellow-creatures as ourselves.

To furnish a Standard of Morality, some of our adversaries have had recourse to *the laws of the state;* avowing them to be the rule or measure of virtue. Mr. Hobbes maintained that *the civil law was the sole foundation of right and wrong*, and that *religion had no obligation but as enjoined by the magistrate:* and Lord Bolingbroke often writes in a strain nearly similar, disowning any other sanction or penalty by which obedience to the law of nature is enforced, than those which are provided by the laws of the land.*

* Works, Vol. V. p. 90.

But this rule is defective, absurd, contradictory, and subversive of all true morality. First, It is grossly defective. This is justly represented by a prophet of their own. "It is a narrow notion of innocence," says Seneca, "to measure a man's goodness only by "the law. Of how much larger extent is the rule "of duty, or of good offices, than that of legal right? "How many things are there which piety, humanity, "liberality, justice, and fidelity require, which yet are "not within the compass of the public statutes?"* Secondly, It is absurd: for if the public statutes be the only standard of right and wrong, legislators in framing them could be under no law; nor is it possible that in any instance they should have enacted injustice. Thirdly, It is contradictory. Human laws, we all know, require different and opposite things in different nations; and in the same nation at different times. If this principle be right, it is right for deists to be persecuted for their opinions at one period, and to persecute others for theirs at another. Finally, It is *subversive of all true morality*. "The civil "laws," as Dr. Leland has observed, "take no cogni- "zance of secret crimes, and provide no punishment "for internal bad dispositions, or corrupt affections. "A man may be safely as wicked as he pleases, on "this principle, provided he can manage so as to es- "cape punishment from the laws of his country, "which very bad men, and those that are guilty of "great vices easily may, and frequently do evade."

Rousseau has recourse to *feelings* as his standard. "I have only to consult myself," he says, "concerning "what I ought to do. All that I *feel* to be right is "right. Whatever I *feel* to be wrong is wrong. All "the morality of our actions lies in the judgment "we ourselves form of them."† By this rule his conduct through life appears to have been directed, as we shall hereafter perceive.

* Leland's Advantage and Necessity of Revelation, Vol. II. Pt. II. Ch. III. p. 42.

† Emilius, Vol. I. p. 166—168.

But that on which our opponents insist the most, and with the greatest shew of argument, is *the law and light of nature*. This is their professed rule on almost all occasions; and its praises they are continually sounding. I have no desire to depreciate the light of nature, or to disparage its value as a rule. On the contrary, I consider it as occupying an important place in the divine government. Whatever may be said of the light possessed by the heathen as being derived from Revelation, I feel no difficulty in acknowledging, that the grand law which they are under is that of nature. Revelation itself appears to me so to represent it; holding it up as the rule by which they shall be judged, and declaring its dictates to be so clear as to leave them *without excuse.** Nature and Scripture appear to me to be as much in harmony as Moses and Christ; both are celebrated in the same Psalm.†

By the *light of nature*, however, I do not mean those ideas which heathens have actually entertained, many of which have been darkness; but those which were presented to them by the works of creation, and which they might have possessed had they been desirous of retaining God in their knowledge. And by the *dictates of nature*, with regard to right and wrong, I understand those things which appear to the mind of a person sincerely disposed to understand and practise his duty, to be *natural, fit, or reasonable*. There is doubtless an eternal difference between right and wrong; and this difference, in a vast variety of instances, is manifest to every man who sincerely and impartially considers it. So manifest have the power and Godhead of the Creator been rendered in every age, that no person of an upright disposition could, through mere mistake, fall into idolatry or impiety; and every one who has continued in these abominations is *without excuse*. The desire also which every human being feels of having justice done to him from all other persons, must render it sufficiently manifest to his judgment

* Rom. ii. 12—16. i. 20. † Ps. xix.

that he ought to do the ſame to them; and wherein he acts otherwiſe, his conſcience, unleſs it be ſeared as with a hot iron, muſt accuſe him.

But does it follow from hence that Revelation is unneceſſary. I trow not. It is one thing for nature to afford ſo much light, in matters of right and wrong, as to leave the ſinner without excuſe; and another to afford him any well-grounded hope of forgiveneſs, or to anſwer his difficulties concerning the account which ſomething within him ſays he muſt hereafter give of his preſent conduct.

Farther, It is one thing to leave ſinners without excuſe in ſin, and another thing to recover them from it. That the light of nature is inſufficient for the latter, is demonſtrated by melancholy fact. Inſtead of returning to God and virtue, thoſe nations which have poſſeſſed the higheſt degrees of it have gone farther and farther into immorality. There is not a ſingle example of a people, of their own accord, returning to the acknowledgment of the true God, or extricating themſelves from the moſt irrational ſpecies of idolatry, or deſiſting from the moſt odious kinds of vice. Thoſe nations where ſcience diffuſed a more than ordinary luſtre, were as ſuperſtitious, and as wicked as the moſt barbarous; and in many inſtances exceeded them. It was, I doubt not, from a cloſe obſervation of the different efficacy of nature and ſcripture, that the writer of the 19th Pſalm, (a Pſalm which Mr. Paine pretends to admire) after having given a juſt tribute of praiſe to the former, affirmed of the latter, *The law of Jehovah is perfect, converting the ſoul.*

Again, It is one thing for that which is natural, fit, or reaſonable, in matters of duty, to approve itſelf to a mind *ſincerely diſpoſed to underſtand and practiſe it*, and another to approve itſelf to a mind of an oppoſite deſcription. The judgments of men concerning the dictates of nature are greatly influenced by their prevailing inclinations. If, under certain circumſtances, they feel prompted to a particular courſe of conduct, they will be apt to conſider that promptitude as a dictate of

nature, though it may be no other than corrupt propenſity: and thus, while the law of nature is continually in their mouth, their principles, as well as their conduct, are a continual violation of it. How was it that, notwithſtanding the light of nature ſhone round the old philoſophers, their minds, in matters of morality, were dark as night, and their precepts, in many inſtances, full of impurity? Did nature inſpire Plato to teach the doctrine of a community of wives; Lycurgus to tolerate dexterous thieving; Solon to allow of ſodomy; Seneca to encourage drunkenneſs and ſuicide; and almoſt all of them to declare in favour of lewdneſs?* No, verily; it is a perverſion of language to call the principles of ſuch men the dictates of nature: they are unnatural and abominable; as contrary to reaſon as to religion.

It is true, what is called nature by modern infidels, is not quite ſo groſs as the above; but it falls very little ſhort of it. So far as relates to the encouragement of theft, and, perhaps, of unnatural crimes, they would diſavow; and for this we are indebted to Chriſtianity: but as to fornication and adultery, they are not a whit behind their predeceſſors.

Lord Herbert, the father of the Engliſh deiſts, and whoſe writings are far more ſober than the generality of thoſe who have come after him, apologizes for lewdneſs, in certain caſes, as reſembling thirſt in a dropſy, and inactivity in a lethargy.† Lord Bolingbroke unbluſhingly inſinuates, that the only conſideration that can reconcile a man to confine himſelf by marriage to one woman, and a woman to one man, is this, that nothing hinders but that they may indulge their deſires with others.‡ This is the ſame as accuſing the whole human race of incontinency, and denying that there is any ſuch thing as conjugal fidelity; a plain proof that whoever was clear of this indecent

* See Leland's Advantage and Neceſſity of Revelation, Vol. I. p. 147, 50, 59, 210, 213.

† Leland's Review, &c. Vol. I. Let. I.

‡ Works, Vol. V. p. 167.

charge, Lord Bolingbroke was not. Mr. Hume, who has written a volume on the principles of morality, ſcruples not to ſtigmatize ſelf-denial as "a monkiſh "virtue;" and adopts the opinion of a French writer, that "adultery muſt be practiſed if we would obtain "all the advantages of life; that female infidelity, "when known, is a ſmall thing, and when unknown, "nothing."

It is true, theſe writers will, on ſome occaſions, deſcant in favour of chaſtity, as being conducive to health and reputation; but on others they ſeldom fail to apologize for the contrary, and that under the pretence of indulging the dictates of nature. Yet the ſame things might be alleged in behalf of oppreſſion, revenge, theft, duelling, ambitious war, and a thouſand other vices which deſolate the earth: they are practices which men, placed in certain circumſtances, will feel themſelves prompted to commit; nor is there a vice that can be named but what would admit of ſuch an apology.

Finally, It is one thing for the light of nature to be ſo clear as to render idolatry, impiety, and injuſtice inexcuſable; and another thing to render the *whole will* of our Creator evident, and in the moſt *advantageous manner*. If a perſon, poſſeſſed of only the light of nature, were ever ſo ſincerely deſirous of knowing God, or grieved for the ſins of which his conſcience accuſed him, or attached to the holy, the juſt, and the good; or diſpoſed to obey his Creator's will if he did but underſtand it; though he ſhould be in no danger of confounding the dictates of nature with thoſe of corrupt propenſity, yet he muſt labour under great diſadvantages; which, allowing they might not affect his eternal ſtate, yet would greatly injure his preſent peace and uſefulneſs.

To illuſtrate this remark, let us ſuppoſe the inhabitants of a province to throw off the government of a juſt and lawful prince. Being once engaged, they may feel themſelves impelled to go forward. They may chooſe new rulers, and uſe all poſſible means to

efface every ſign and memorial of the authority of their ancient ſovereign. They may even labour to forget, and teach their children to forget, if poſſible, that there ever was ſuch a character in being, to whom they owed allegiance. Yet, after all, there may be certain traces and memorials of his government which it is not in their power to efface. Yea, there may be continued inſtances of forbearance and clemency, which, in ſpite of all their efforts, will bear witneſs of his goodneſs and juſt authority over them.

Thus it was that God, while he *ſuffered all nations to walk in their own ways, nevertheleſs* LEFT NOT HIMSELF WITHOUT A WITNESS, *in that he did good, and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful ſeaſons, filling their hearts with food and gladneſs.* But as the memorials of juſt authority in the one caſe, though ſufficient to leave the rebellious without excuſe, would not contain a *full* expreſſion of the prince's will, nor be conveyed in ſo *advantageous* a manner as that in which he treated his profeſſed ſubjects; ſo the light afforded by the works of nature, and the continued goodneſs of God, in the other, though ſufficient to leave the world without excuſe, does not expreſs his *whole* will, nor convey what it does expreſs ſo *advantageouſly* as by Revelation. And as an individual reſiding in the midſt of the rebellious province, whoſe heart might relent, and who might long to return to his allegiance, would be under inexpreſſible diſadvantages, ſo it muſt neceſſarily be with a heathen, whoſe deſire ſhould be towards the God againſt whom he had ſinned.

The amount is, that modern unbelievers have no ſtandard of morals, except it be their own inclination. Morality with them is any thing, or nothing, as conveniency requires. On ſome occaſions they will praiſe that of Jeſus Chriſt: but ere we can have time to aſk them, Why then do you not ſubmit to it, they are employed in oppoſing it. Attend to their general declamations in favour of virtue, and you will be ready to imagine they are its warmeſt friends: but follow them up, and obſerve their expoſition of particular precepts, and you will be convinced that they are

its decided enemies; applauding in the groſs, that which they are ever undermining in detail.

By the fooliſh and diſcordant accounts which theſe writers give of morality, it ſhould ſeem that they know not what it is. Every new ſpeculator is diſſatisfied with the definition of his predeceſſor, and endeavours to mend it. "Virtue," ſays Lord Shafteſbury, "is a "ſenſe of beauty, of harmony, of order, and propor- "tion, an affection towards the whole of our kind, or "ſpecies." "It is," ſays Lord Bolingbroke, "only "the love of *ourſelves*." "It is every thing that tends "to preſerve and perfect man," ſays Volney; and as "good reputation" has this tendency, it is in his account "a moral good."* "It is whatever is *uſeful* in "ſociety," ſays Mr. Hume; and as "health, cleanli- "neſs, facility of expreſſion, broad ſhoulders, and "taper legs" are of uſe, they are to be reckoned amongſt the virtues. To this might have been added, *a large portion of effrontery*, as the laſt named writer aſſures us (it may be from his own experience) that "nothing carries a man through the world like a true "genuine, natural impudence."† Mr. Paine brings up the rear, and informs us, "It is *doing juſtice, loving* "*mercy, and* . . . . endeavouring to make our fellow- "creatures happy." O Paine, had you but for once ſuffered yourſelf to be taught by a prophet, and have quoted his words as they ſtand, you would undoubtedly have borne away the palm: but you had rather write nonſenſe than ſay any thing in favour of *godlineſs*.

It is worthy of notice, that amidſt all the diſcordance of theſe writers, they agree in excluding the Divine Being from their theory of morals. They think after their manner; but *God is not in all their thoughts*. In comparing the Chriſtian doctrine of morality, the ſum of which is *love*, with their atheiſtical jargon, one ſeems to hear the voice of the Almighty, ſaying, *Who is this that darkeneth counſel with words*

* Law of Nature, p. 17.

† Enquiry concerning the principles of morals, § 6, 7, 8.—Eſſays Moral and Political, Eſ. III. p. 15.

without knowledge?—Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.

The words of Scripture are ſpirit and life. They are the language of *love*. Every exhortation of Chriſt and his apoſtles is impregnated with this ſpirit. Let the reader turn to the twelfth chapter of the epiſtle to the Romans, for an example, and read it carefully; let him find, if he can, any thing in the pureſt part of the writings of deiſts that is worthy of being compared with it.—No; virtue itſelf is no longer virtue in their hands. It loſes its charms when they affect to embrace it. Their touch is that of the cold hand of death. The moſt lovely object is deprived by it of life and beauty, and reduced to a ſhrivelled maſs of inactive formality.

CHAP. IV.

Chriſtianity furniſhes motives to a virtuous life, which Deiſm either rejects, or attempts to undermine.

SO long as our adverſaries profeſs a regard to virtue, and acknowledge with Lord Bolingbroke, that "the "goſpel is in all caſes one continued leſſon of the "ſtricteſt morality; of juſtice, of benevolence, and of "univerſal charity,"* they muſt allow thoſe to be the beſt principles which furniſh the moſt effectual motives for reducing it to practice.

Now there is not a doctrine in the whole compaſs of Chriſtianity but what is improveable to this purpoſe. It is a grand peculiarity of the goſpel, that none of its principles are merely ſpeculative; each is pregnant with a practical uſe. Nor does the diſcovery of it require any extraordinary degree of ingenuity; real Chriſtians, however weak as to their natural capacities, have always been taught by the goſpel of Chriſt, that

* Works, Vol. V. p. 188.

denying ungodlineſs, and worldly luſts, they ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in the preſent world.

Ancient philoſophers have taught many things in favour of morality, ſo far at leaſt as reſpect juſtice and goodneſs towards our fellow-creatures; but where are the motives by which the minds of the people, or even their own minds, have been moved to a compliance with them? They framed a curious machine; but who amongſt them could diſcover a power to work it? What principles have appeared in the world under the names either of philoſophy or religion, that can bear a compariſon with the following?

God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life—Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and ſent his Son to be a propitiation for our ſins. Beloved, if God ſo loved us, we ought alſo to love one another. Let all bitterneſs, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil ſpeaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven you—Be ye followers, or imitators of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Chriſt alſo hath loved us, and given himſelf for us, an offering, and a ſacrifice to God of a ſweet ſmelling ſavour—Ye are a choſen generation, a royal prieſthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye ſhould ſhew forth the praiſes of him who hath called you out of darkneſs into his marvellous light—Come out from amongſt them, and be ye ſeparate, ſaith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you; and will be a Father unto you, and ye ſhall be my ſons and daughters, ſaith the Lord Almighty. Having, therefore, theſe promiſes, dearly beloved, let us cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of God—If there be, therefore, any conſolation in Chriſt, if any comfort of love, if any fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy,—be of one accord, of one mind: let nothing be done through ſtrife, or vain glory, but in lowlineſs of mind let each eſteem other better than themſelves—Dearly beloved, I beſeech you as ſtrangers and

*pilgrims, abſtain from fleſhly luſts which war againſt the ſoul; having your converſation honeſt among the Gentiles, that whereas they ſpeak againſt you as evil-doers, they may, by your good works which they ſhall behold, glorify God in the day of viſitation—Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your ſpirit, which are God's—The love of Chriſt conſtraineth us, becauſe we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they who live ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him who died for them, and roſe again—The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe, and the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat: the earth alſo, and the works that are therein, ſhall be burnt up. Seeing then that all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved, what manner of perſons ought ye to be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs, looking for, and haſtening unto the coming of the day of God!—Hold faſt that which thou haſt; let no man take thy crown!—To him that overcometh will I grant to ſit down with me in my throne, even as I alſo overcame, and am ſet down with my Father in his throne.**

Theſe are motives by which Chriſtians in every age have been induced to practiſe that morality, which Bolingbroke, Paine, and many others, while writing againſt Chriſtianity, have been compelled to applaud: but the far greater part of them are rejected by deiſts; and what will they ſubſtitute of equal efficacy in their place? The love of Chriſt conſtraineth *us*; but what have they to conſtrain *them?* Will ſelf-love, or the beauty or utility of virtue anſwer the purpoſe? Let hiſtory and obſervation determine.

It may be alleged, however, that deiſts do not reject the *whole* of theſe important motives; for that ſome of them at leaſt admit the doctrine of *a future life*, which, with the acknowledgment of one living and true God, may be thought ſufficient for all the purpoſes of morality.

* John iii. 18. 1 John, iii. 10, 11. Eph. iv. 31, 32. v. 1, 2. 1 Pet. ii. 9. 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. vii. 1. Phil. ii. 1, 2, 3. 1 Pet. ii. 11, 12. 1 Cor. vi. 20. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. 2 Pet. iii. 10, 11, 12. Rev. iii. 11, 21.

That the doctrine of a future life is of great importance in the moral syſtem, is allowed; but the greateſt truth, if diſſevered from other truths of equal imporance, will be diveſted of its energy. A hand diſſevered from the body might as well be repreſented as ſufficient for the purpoſes of labour, as one or two unconnected principles for the purpoſe of morality. This is actually the caſe in the preſent inſtance. The doctrine of a future life, as held by Chriſtians, has ſtimulated them to labour and ſuffer without intermiſſion. From a *reſpect to this recompenſe of reward*, a kingdom has been refuſed, where the acceptance of it would have interfered with a good conſcience. Yea, life itſelf has been ſacrificed, and that not in a few, but in innumerable inſtances, where it could not be retained but at the expenſe of truth and uprightneſs. But is it thus amongſt deiſts? Does the doctrine of a future life, as held by them, produce any ſuch effects? When was it known, or heard of, that they ſacrificed any thing for this, or any other principle of a moral nature? Who amongſt them ever thought of ſuch a thing; or who expected it at their hands?

But this is not all: there is ſuch a connexion in truth, that if one part of it be given up, it will render us leſs friendly towards other parts, and ſo deſtroy their efficacy. This alſo is actually the caſe in the preſent inſtance. Our adverſaries do not cordially embrace even this truth; but on the contrary are continually undermining it, and rendering it of no effect. Lord Herbert, it is true, conſidered it as an eſſential article of natural religion; and it was his opinion that he could ſcarcely be accounted a reaſonable creature who denied it: but this is far from being the caſe with later deiſtical writers; the greater part of whom either deny it, or repreſent it as a matter of doubt. Some of them diſown every principle by which it is ſupported, and others go ſo far as to hold it up to ridicule, labouring withal to prove the hope of it unfriendly to the diſintereſted love of virtue.

Volney in his *Law of Nature, or Catechism for French Citizens*, says nothing about it.—Paine just touches upon it in the outset of his *Age of Reason*, by informing us, that "He *hopes* for happiness beyond this life:" but as happiness has its counterpart, and stands upon the general doctrine of *retribution*, he is afraid to say he *believes* it. It must be reduced to a mere matter of "probability," lest the thoughts of it should damp him in his present pursuits, and render him "the slave "of terror."*

Bolingbroke, though he acknowledges its antiquity, and great utility in promoting virtue, yet represents it as a "mere invention of philosophers and legislators," and as being "originally an hypothesis, and which "may therefore be a vulgar error." "Reason," he says, "will neither affirm nor deny a future state." By this the reader might be led to expect that this writer was neither for it, nor against it; yet the whole of his reasonings are directed to undermine it.†

Hume, like the writer last mentioned, acknowledges the utility of the doctrine, but questions its truth. He would not have people disabused, or delivered from such a prejudice, because it would free them from one restraint upon their passions. Any person who should undertake this work, he allows, would be a bad citizen; yet he might, for aught he knows, be a good reasoner.‡

Shaftesbury goes farther: he employs all his wit and satire in endeavouring to raise a laugh at the very idea, representing the heathen world as very happy till Christianity arose, and teazed them about a hereafter.—"A new sort of policy," says he, "which extends it-"self to another world, and considers the future lives "and happiness of men rather than the present, has "made us leap beyond the bounds of natural human-"ity, and out of a supernatural charity has taught us "the way of plaguing one another most devoutly."§

* Age of Reason, Pt. I. p. 1. Pt. II. p. 100, 101.

† Works, Vol. V. ‡ Philosophical Essays, p. 231.

§ Characteristics, Vol. I. p. 18.

Lord Shafteſbury's wit may very well be paſſed by as being what it is: it ſuffices, in connexion with the foregoing quotations, to ſhew us what efficacy the doctrine of a future life, as held by deiſts, may be expected to poſſeſs. But this writer is not contented with raillery; he muſt alſo attempt to *reaſon* againſt the doctrine, contending that it has a pernicious influence on the morals of men; that it is a mercenary principle, and oppoſed to the diſintereſted love of virtue for its own ſake. "The principle of ſelf-love," he obſerves, "which is naturally ſo prevailing in us, "is improved, and made ſtronger by the exerciſe of "the paſſions on a ſubject of more extended intereſt: "and there may be reaſon to apprehend that a temper "of this kind will extend itſelf through all the parts "of life. And this has a tendency to create a ſtricter "attention to ſelf-good and private intereſt, and muſt "inſenſibly diminiſh the affection towards public "good, or the intereſt of ſociety, and introduce a "certain narrowneſs of ſpirit, which is obſervable in "the devout perſons and zealots of almoſt every re-"ligious perſuaſion."*

This objection, the reader will recollect, is in direct contradiction to the principles of Bolingbroke, and it may be added, of Volney, and other deiſtical writers, who maintain ſelf-love to be the origin of virtuous affection. Some Chriſtian writers, in anſwering it, have given up the doctrine of diſintereſted love, allowing that all religious affection is to be traced to the love which we bear to ourſelves as its firſt principle. To me this appears no other than betraying the truth, and ranking Chriſtianity with every ſpecies of apoſtacy and falſe religion, which have at any time prevailed in the world. A clear idea of the nature of ſelf-love, if I miſtake not, will enable us to determine this queſtion, and to anſwer the deiſtical objection without rendering Chriſtianity a mercenary ſyſtem.

Every man may be conſidered either ſingly, or connectedly; either as a being by himſelf, or as a link in

* Characteriſtics, Vol. II. p. 58.

a certain chain of beings. Under one or other of these views every man considers himself while pursuing his own interest. If the former, this is to make himself the ultimate end of his actions, and to love all other beings, created or uncreated, only as they subserve his interest or his pleasure; this is private self-love; this is mean, and mercenary, and what we commonly understand by the term *selfishness*. But if the latter, there is nothing mean or selfish in it. He who seeks his own well-being in connexion with the general good, seeks it as he ought to do. No man is required directly to oppose his own welfare, though in some instances he may be required to sacrifice it for the general good. Neither is it necessary that he should be indifferent towards it.—Reason, as well as scripture, requires us to love ourselves as we love our neighbour. To this may be added, every man is not only a link in the chain of intelligent beings, and so deserving of some regard from himself, as well as from others; but every man's person, family, and connexions, and still more the concerns of his soul, are, as it were, his own vineyard, over the interests of which it is his peculiar province to exercise a watchful care. Only let the care of himself and his immediate connexions be in subserviency to the general good, and there is nothing mercenary in it.

I need not multiply arguments to prove that the doctrine of *rewards* does not necessarily tend to encourage a mercenary spirit, or that it is consistent with the disinterested love of virtue. Lord Shaftesbury himself has acknowledged this. "If by the hope "of reward," he says, "be understood the love and "desire of virtuous enjoyment, or of the very practice "or exercise of virtue in another life, the expectation "or hope of this kind is so far from being derogatory "to virtue, that it is an evidence of our loving it the "more sincerely, and for its own sake."*—This single concession contains an answer to all which his

* Characteristics, Vol. II. p. 65, 66.

lordſhip has advanced on the ſubject: for the rewards promiſed in the goſpel are all exactly of the deſcription which he mentions. It is true they are often repreſented under the images of earthly things; but this does not prove that in themſelves they are not pure and ſpiritual. That there is nothing in them adapted to gratify a mercenary ſpirit, the following obſervations will render plain to the meaneſt capacity.

Firſt, The nature of heavenly enjoyments is ſuch as to admit of no monopoly, and conſequently to leave no room for the exerciſe of private ſelf-love. Like the beams of the ſun, they are equally adapted to give joy to a world as to an individual: nay, ſo far is an increaſe in the number of the participants from diminiſhing the quantum of happineſs poſſeſſed by each individual, that it has a tendency to increaſe it. The intereſt of one is the intereſt of all; and the intereſt of all extends to every one.

Secondly, The ſum of heavenly enjoyments conſiſts in a holy likeneſs to God, and in the eternal enjoyment of his favour.* But holy likeneſs to God is the ſame thing as "the very practice or exerciſe of virtue," the hope of which Lord Shafteſbury acknowledges "is ſo far from being derogatory to it, that it is an "evidence of our loving it the more ſincerely, and for "its own ſake." And as to the enjoyment of the divine favour, a proper purſuit of this object, inſtead of being at variance with diſintereſted affection, clearly *implies* it; for no man can truly deſire the favour of God as his chief good, without a proportionate eſteem of his character, and that for its own excellency. It is impoſſible that the favour of any being whoſe character we diſapprove, ſhould be ſought as our chief good, in preference to every other object in the univerſe. But a cordial approbation of the divine character is the ſame thing as a diſintereſted affection to virtue.

Thirdly, The only method by which the rewards of the goſpel are attainable, faith in Chriſt, ſecures

* 1 John, iii. 2. Rev. xxi. 3, 4.

the exercise of disinterested and enlarged virtue. No man has any warrant from the scriptures to expect an interest in the promises of the gospel, unless he cordially acquiesce in his mediation. But to acquiesce in this, is to acquiesce in the holy government of God, which it was designed to glorify; to feel and acknowledge that we deserved to have been made sacrifices to divine displeasure; to forego all claim or hope of mercy from every selfish consideration; and to be willing to receive forgiveness as an act of mere grace, and along with the chief of sinners. In fine, to acquiesce in this, is to be of one heart with the Saviour of sinners, which, our adversaries themselves being judges, is the same thing as to be filled with devoutness to God, and benevolence to men; and this, if any thing deserves that name, is true, disinterested and enlarged virtue.

It is very possible that the objections which are made by this writer, as well as Mr. Paine and others, against the doctrine of *rewards*, as being servile and mercenary, may after all, in reality, be against their *counterpart*.—It does not appear to be "the hope of happiness "beyond this life" that excites their disgust, though the nature of the Christian's happiness might be disagreeable to them; but the fear of being "called to ac- "count for the manner in which they have lived in this "world." This it is which even the daring author of *The Age of Reason* cannot endure to consider as a certainty, as the thought of it would render him "the "slave of terror." Yet, as though he would not have it thought that the dread of futurity rendered him afraid of believing it, he alleges another reason. "Our belief, on this principle," he says, "would have "no merit, and our best actions no virtue."* In order then to our actions being virtuous, it is necessary, it seems, that we be under no law but that of our own inclination; and this will be loving virtue *for its own sake*. This is at once shaking off the divine authority;

* Age of Reason, Part II. p. 100, 101.

which, if it could be accomplished, might be very agreeable to some men; and if, with this they could get fairly rid of a judgment to come, it might be still more agreeable: but, alas, if they should be mistaken!

It is a fact that the passions of hope and fear are planted in our nature by Him who made us; and it may be presumed they are not planted there in vain. The proper exercise of the former has, I conceive, been proved to be consistent with the purest, and most disinterested love; and the same thing is proveable of the latter. The hope and fear against which these writers declaim, are those of a slave; and where love is absent, these, it is granted, are the only effects which the doctrine of rewards and punishments will produce. But even here they have their use. Terror is the grand principle by which vicious minds are kept in awe. Without this, their licentiousness would be intolerable to society. It is not, however, for the mere purpose of restraint, that threatenings are exhibited, but to express the displeasure of God against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, and his resolution to punish it. Some are hereby taught the evil of their ways to a good purpose, and all are fairly warned, and their perseverance in sin is rendered inexcusable.

Before our adversaries object to this, they should shew the impropriety of human laws being accompanied with penalties. Let them furnish us with a system of government in which men may be guilty of crimes without fear of being called to account for them; and in which those who are enemies to virtue are to be governed merely by the love of it. If it be improper to threaten sinners, it is improper to punish them; and if it be improper to punish them, it is improper for moral government to be exercised. But if it be thus in the government of God, there is no good reason to be given why it should not be the same in human governments; that is, there is no good reason why servants, unless they choose to do otherwise, should not disobey their masters, children their parents, and private indi-

viduals in a ſtate be continually riſing up to deſtroy all juſt authority.

The above may ſuffice to aſcertain the weight of Lord Shafteſbury's objections to the doctrine of rewards; and now I ſhall take the liberty to retort the charge, and attempt to prove that the epithets "narrow" and ſelfiſh," which he applies to the Chriſtian ſyſtem, properly belong to his own.

In his *Inquiry concerning Virtue*, contained in the ſecond volume of his *Characteriſtics*, though he allows it to conſiſt in our being proportionably affected towards the whole ſyſtem to which we bear a relation;* and that this world may be only a part of a more extended ſyſtem;† yet he ſtudiouſly leaves out God as the head of it. Amongſt all the *relations* which he enumerates, there is no mention of that between the creature and his Creator. His enlarged and diſintereſted ſcheme of morality is at laſt nothing more than for a creature to regard thoſe "of its own kind or "ſpecies." Not only is all gentleneſs, kindneſs, and compaſſion to inferior creatures left out, but the love of God is not in it. On the contrary, it is the profeſſed object of his *Inquiry* to prove that virtue, goodneſs, or moral excellency, may exiſt without religion, and even "in an atheiſt."‡ In ſhort, it is manifeſt that it is the love of God, and not ſelf-love, to which his love of virtue *for its own ſake* ſtands oppoſed. That for which he pleads is the impious ſpirit of a child, who, diſregarding his father's favour, pays no attention to his commands, *as his commands;* but complies with them only on account of their approving themſelves to his own mind. But this is no other than ſelf-will, which, inſtead of being oppoſed to ſelf-love, is one of its genuine exerciſes.

"Our holy religion," ſays this ſneering writer, "takes but little notice of the moſt heroic virtues, "ſuch as zeal for the public, and our country."§

* Page 17. † P. 20. ‡ P. 6.

§ Characteriſtics, Vol. I. p. 98, 99.

That Chriſtianity takes but little notice of what is commonly called *patriotiſm*, is admitted; and if Lord Shafteſbury had been free from that "narrowneſs of "mind" which it is his intention here to cenſure; yea, if he had only kept to his own definition of virtue, "A regard to thoſe of our own kind or ſpecies," he would have taken as little. By the public good he evidently means no more than the temporal proſperity of a particular country; which is to be ſought at the expenſe of all other countries with whom it happens, juſtly or unjuſtly, to be at variance. Chriſtianity, we acknowledge, knows nothing of this ſpirit. It is ſuperior to it. It is not natural for a Chriſtian to enter into the antipathies, or embroil himſelf in the contentions of a nation, however he may be occaſionally drawn into them. His ſoul is much more in its element when breathing after the preſent and future happineſs of a world. In undertakings, both public and private, which tend to alleviate the miſeries and enlarge the comforts of human life, Chriſtians have ever been foremoſt; and when they have conceived themſelves lawfully called even into the field of battle, they have not been wanting in valour. But the heroiſm to which they principally aſpire is of another kind: it is that of ſubduing their own ſpirit, doing good againſt evil, ſeeking the preſent and eternal well-being of thoſe who hate them, and laying down their lives if required, for the name of our Lord Jeſus.

Such is the "narrow ſpirit" of Chriſtians; and ſuch have been their "ſelfiſh purſuits." But theſe are things which do not emblazon their names in the account of unbelievers. The murderers of mankind will be applauded before them. But they have enough: their blood is precious in the ſight of the Lord, and their names are embalmed in the memory of the upright.

CHAP. V.

The lives of those who reject the Gospel will not bear a comparison with theirs who embrace it.

NO books are so plain as the lives of men; no characters are so legible as their moral conduct. If the principles of a body of men will not bear this criterion, we may expect to hear them exclaim against it as unfair, and uncertain; but when they have said all, they will endeavour to avail themselves of it, if possible. It is thus that the virtues of idolaters are the constant theme of deistical panegyric; and all the corruptions, intrigues, persecutions, wars, and mischiefs, which of late ages have afflicted the earth, are charged to the account of Christians. It is thus that Christian ministers, under the name of *priests*, are described as mercenary, designing, and hypocritical; and the lives of hectoring profligates praised in comparison, of them.* In short, it is thus that Christians are accused of fanaticism, affectation, ingratitude, presumption, and almost every thing else that is mean and base; and men are persuaded to become deists, with an assurance that by so doing they will "live more consistently and morally, "than by any other system."†

But let us examine whether these representations accord with fact. Is it fact that the ancient philosophers of Greece and Rome were virtuous characters? —It is true that, like the deists, they talked and wrote much about virtue, and if the latter may be believed, they were very virtuous. "They opposed each other," says Voltaire, "in their dogmas; but in morality they "were all agreed." After loading each of them with encomiums, he sums it up by affirming, "There has "been no philosopher in all antiquity who has not been

* Hume's Essays, Moral and Political, Essay XXIV.

† Age of Reason, Part I. p. 21.

"desirous of making men better."* This is a very favourable report; and, if well founded, the writer of the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans must not only have dealt largely in calumny, but have possessed the most consummate effrontery, to address such an epistle to the citizens of Rome, who, from their own knowledge, must have been able to contradict him. There are other reports, however, of a very different complexion.

It is no part of my design to enter minutely into this subject; nor is it necessary. Many able writers have proved, from the most authentic sources of information, that the account given of the heathens by the apostle is not exaggerated. An extract or two from their writings will be sufficient for my purpose.

"Epictetus bids you *temporize, and worship the gods* "*after the fashion of your country.*† Pythagoras forbids "you to *pray to God, because you know not what is conve-* "*nient.*"‡ Plutarch commends Cato Uticensis for killing himself amidst philosophic thoughts, with resolution and deliberation, after reading Plato on the immortality of the soul.§ Cicero pleads for self-murder. Herein he was seconded by Brutus, Cassius, and others who practised it. Many of their learned men applauded their opinion and practice. Seneca thus pleads for it: "If thy mind be melancholy and in "misery, thou mayest put a period to this wretched "condition: wherever thou lookest, there is an end "to it. See that precipice; there thou mayest have "liberty. Seest thou that sea, that river, that well? "liberty is at the bottom of it: that little tree? free- "dom hangs upon it: thy own neck, thy own throat "may be a refuge to thee, from such servitude; yea, "every vein of thy body."‖

* Ignorant Philosopher, p. 60.

† Enchiridion, Cap. 38. pag. m. 56.

‡ Diog. Laertius.

§ Plutarch's Life of Cato, near the end.

‖ De ira, Lib. 3, Cap. 15, pag. m. 319.

"We may find in the heathen philosophers customary swearing commended if not by their precepts, yet by the examples of their best moralists. Plato, Socrates, Seneca, and Julian the emperor, in whose works numerous oaths by Jupiter, Hercules, the Sun, Serapis, and the like, do occur. In the same manner we see the unnatural love of boys recommended."* "Aristippus maintained *that it was lawful for a wise man to steal, commit adultery, and sacrilege, when opportunity offered; for that none of these actions were naturally evil, setting aside the vulgar opinion, which was introduced into the world by silly and illiterate people—that a wise man might publickly, without shame or scandal, keep company with common harlots, if his inclinations led him to it.*" "May not a beautiful woman be made use of, he asks, because she is fair: or a youth because he is lovely? *Certainly they may.*"†

If, as Voltaire asserts, it was the desire of these philosophers to make men better, assuredly they employed very extraordinary means to accomplish their desire.

What are the lives recorded by Plutarch? Many of them no doubt entertained a high sense of honour, and possessed a large portion of patriotism. But were either of these morality? If by this term he meant such dispositions of the mind as are right, fit and amiable, it was not. Their sense of honour was not of that kind which made them scorn to do evil; but like the false honour of modern duellists, consisted merely in a dread of disgrace. It induced many of them to carry about them the fatal means of self-destruction; and rather than fall into the hands of an adversary, to make use of them. And as to their patriotism, generally speaking, it operated not merely in the preservation of their country, but in endeavours to extend and aggrandize it, at the expense of other nations. It was a patriotism inconsistent with justice and good will to men. Add to this, that fornication, adultery and unnatural crimes were common amongst them.

* Juvenal Satyr II. Ver. 10.

† Diog. Laertius, Vol. I. pag. m. 165, 166. See in Millar's History of the Propagation of Christianity, Vol. I. p. 63, 64, 65.

As to the moral ſtate of ſociety among heathens, both ancient and modern, we may have occaſion to conſider this a little more particularly hereafter. At preſent I would inquire, Is it fact that the perſecutions, intrigues, wars, and miſchiefs of late ages are to be charged to the account of Chriſtianity?

With regard to *perſecution*, nothing is more common with our adverſaries than to lay it wholly at our door. They are continually alleging that the heathens all agreed to tolerate each other till Chriſtianity aroſe.—Thus writes Shafteſbury,* Hume,† Voltaire,‡ Gibbon,§ and Paine.‖ That the heathens tolerated each other before the introduction of Chriſtianity, is allowed; and they did the ſame after it. It was not againſt each other that their enmity was directed. In the diverſity of their idols and modes of worſhip, there were indeed *different adminiſtrations*, *but* it was *the ſame lord*: whereas, in the religion of Jeſus Chriſt there was nothing that could aſſociate with heatheniſm, but every thing that threatened its utter ſubverſion.

It is allowed alſo that individual perſecution, except in a few inſtances, commenced with Chriſtianity: but who began the practice? Was it Jeſus that perſecuted Herod and Pontius Pilate; or they him? Did Peter, and James, and John, and Paul ſet up for inquiſitors, and perſecute the Jews and Romans; or the Jews and Romans them? Did the primitive Chriſtians diſcover any diſpoſition to perſecute? By whom was Europe deluged over with blood in ten ſucceſſive perſecutions during the three firſt centuries? Were Chriſtians the authors of this? When the church had ſo far degenerated as to imbibe many of the principles and ſuperſtitions of the heathen, then indeed it began to imitate their perſecuting ſpirit; but not before. When Chriſt's kingdom was transformed into a kingdom of this world, the weapons of its warfare

* Characteriſtics, Vol. I. p. 18. † Eſſay on Parties.
‡ Ignor. Philoſ. p. 83. § Hiſt. of Decl. Ch. II. p. 29.
‖ Age of Reaſon, Part II. Pref.

might be expected to become carnal, and to be no longer as formerly, *mighty through God.*

The religious persecutions among Christians have been compared to the massacres attending the French Revolution in the times of Robespierre. The horrid barbarities of the latter, it has been said, by way of apology, "have not even been equal to those of the "former." If deists may be allowed to confound Christianity and Popery, I shall not dispute the justness of the comparison. There is no doubt a great resemblance between the Papal and the infidel spirit; or rather they are one. Both are the spirit of this world, which is averse to true religion. The difference between them is but as that between the wolf and the tyger.* But those who reason thus, should prove that the reformers in religion have been guilty of as great excesses as the deistical reformers in politics. Were there any such assassinations amongst the Protestants towards one another, or towards the Papists, as have been wantonly committed by infidels? It is true there were examples of persecution amongst Protestants, and such as will ever remain a dishonour to the parties concerned; but those which affected the lives of men were few in number, compared with the other, and those few, censurable as they are, were not performed by assassination.

Mr. Paine affirms that "all sects of Christians, ex- "cept the Quakers, have persecuted in their turn." That much of this spirit has prevailed is too true: but this assertion is unfounded. I could name more denominations than one, whose hands I believe were never stained with blood, and whose avowed principles have always been in favour of universal liberty of conscience.

But let us inquire into the principles and spirit of our adversaries on this subject. It is true that almost

* The resemblance between Popery and infidelity is pointed out with great beauty and energy in a piece which has appeared in some of the periodical publications, entitled, *The Progress of the Moderns in knowledge, refinement, and virtue.* See Theol. Mag. Vol. I. No. V. p. 344. Evang. Mag. Vol. IV. p. 405.

all their writers have defended the cause of liberty, and levelled their censures against persecution. But where is the man that is not an enemy to this practice when it is directed against himself? Have they discovered a proper regard to the rights of conscience among Christians? This is the question. There may be individuals among them who have; but the generality of their writers discover a shameful partiality in favour of their own side, and a contemptuous disregard of all who have suffered for the name of Christ. While they exhibit persecution in its deservedly infamous colours, they as constantly hold up the persecuted, *if found among Christians*, in a disadvantageous point of view. Mr. Hume allows that "the persecutions of Christians "in the early ages were cruel;" but lays the blame chiefly on themselves:* and all through his *History of England* he palliates the conduct of the persecutors, and represents the persecuted in an unfavourable light. The same may be said of Gibbon in his *History of the Decline of the Roman Empire;* of Shaftesbury in his *Characteristics*, and indeed of the generality of the deistical writers. Voltaire, boasting of the wisdom and moderation of the ancient Romans, says, "they never "persecuted a single philosopher for his opinions, from "the time of Romulus till the popes got possession of "their power."† But did they not persecute Christians? The millions of lives that fell a sacrifice in the first three centuries after the Christian era, are considered as nothing by Voltaire. The benevolence of this apostle of deism feels not for men if they happen to be believers in Christ. If an Aristotle, a Pythagoras, or a Galileo suffer for their opinions, they are "martyrs:" but if a million of French Protestants "from a desire to bring back things to the primitive "institutes of the church," endure the most cruel treatment, or quit their country to escape it, they, according to this writer, are "weak and obstinate men."

* Essay on Parties in general.

† Ignorant Philosopher, p. 82, 83.

Say, reader, Are these men friends to religious liberty? What does all their declamation against persecution amount to but this, that such of them who reside in christianized countries wish to enjoy their opinions without being exposed to it?

Till of late, deists have been in the minority in all the nations of Europe, and have therefore felt the necessity of a free enjoyment of opinion. It is not what they have pleaded under those circumstances, but their conduct when in power, that must prove them friends to religious liberty. Few men are known to be what they are, until tried. They and Protestant Dissenters have, in some respects, been in a similar situation. Of late, each, in a different country, have become the majority, and the civil power has been entrusted in their hands. The descendants of the Puritans in the western world, by dispensing the blessings of liberty even to Episcopalians, by whose persecutions their ancestors were driven from their native shores, have shewn themselves worthy of the trust. But have the deists acted thus in France, and other countries which have fallen into their hands? It is true we believe them to have been the instruments in the hand of God of destroying the papal antichrist; and in this view we rejoice; howbeit, they meant not so. If we judge of their proceedings towards the Catholics in the ordinary way of judging of human actions, which undoubtedly we ought, I fear it will be found not only persecuting, but perfidious and bloody in the extreme.

I am not without hope that liberty of conscience will be preserved in France; and if it should, it will be seen whether the subversion of the national establishment will prove, what the advisers of that measure, without doubt, expected, and what others who abhorred it, apprehended, the extinction of Christianity. It may prove the reverse, and issue in things which will more than balance all the ills attending the revolution. These hopes, however, are not founded on an idea of the just or tolerant spirit of infidelity; but, so far as human motives are concerned, on that regard to *con-*

fiſtency which is known to influence all mankind. If the leading men in France, after having ſo liberally declaimed againſt perſecution, ſhould ever enact laws in favour of it, or, in violation of the laws, encourage it, they muſt appear in a moſt diſgraceful light in the opinion of the whole civilized world.

Not only perſecution, but *unjuſt wars*, *intrigues*, and other miſchiefs, are placed to the account of Chriſtianity. That ſuch things have exiſted, and that men who are called Chriſtians have been deeply concerned in them, is true. Wicked men will act wickedly by whatever name they are called. Whether theſe things be fairly attributable to the Chriſtian religion, may be determined by a few plain inquiries.

Firſt: Did theſe evils commence with Chriſtianity, or have they increaſed under its influence? Has not the world, in every age with which hiſtory acquaints us, been a ſcene of corruption, intrigue, tumult, and ſlaughter? All that can, with any face, be objected to Chriſtianity is, that theſe things have continued in the world *notwithſtanding* its influence; and that they have been practiſed in as great a degree by men calling themſelves Chriſtians as by any other perſons.

Secondly: Are thoſe who ordinarily engage in theſe practices real Chriſtians; and do our adverſaries themſelves account them ſo? They can diſtinguiſh, when they pleaſe, between ſincere and merely nominal Chriſtians. They need not be told that great numbers in every nation are of that religion which happens to prevail at the time; or rather that they are of no religion.

Thirdly: Have not the courts of princes, notwithſtanding Chriſtianity may have been the profeſſed religion of the land, been generally attended by a far greater proportion of deiſts, than of ſerious Chriſtians; and have not public meaſures been directed by the counſels of the former much more than by thoſe of the latter? It is well known that great numbers among the nobility and gentry of every nation conſider religion as ſuited only to vulgar minds; and therefore either wholly abſent themſelves from public worſhip,

or attend but seldom, and then only to save appearances towards a national establishment by which provision is made for the younger branches of their families. In other words they are unbelievers. This is the description of men by which public affairs are commonly managed; and to which the good or the evil pertaining to them, so far as human agency is concerned, is to be attributed.

Fourthly: Great as have been the evils abounding in nations professing Christianity, (and great they have been, and ought greatly to be deplored) can unbelievers pretend to have given us any hope at present of the state of things being meliorated? It is true they have talked and written much in this way; and many well-wishers to the human race have been disposed to give them credit. But it is not words that will prove any thing. Have they *done* any thing that justifies a hope of reformation? No; themselves must first be reformed; or rather, to use an appropriate term of their own, *regenerated*. Far be it from me that in such a cause as this, I should write under the influence of national prejudice, or side with the enemies of civil and religious freedom; but I must say, there never was a representation more necessary than that which was given in an address from the Executive Directory of France to the Council of Five Hundred, about the beginning of the year 1796. In this address they "request the most earnest attention of the Council towards adopting some measure for the *regeneration* of "the public morals." This is the regeneration wanted, and which, having rejected Christianity, they may be ever seeking, but will never be able to obtain. They may continue to revolutionize as long as a party shall be found that wishes for an increase of power, and perceives an opportunity of gaining it; and every party, in its turn, may talk of "saving liberty:" but never will they be *free indeed* until they are emancipated in some good degree from the dominion of vice; and never will this be effected but by a knowledge of evangelical truth.

The friends of legitimate liberty have deeply to regret, that under that revered name has been perpetrated almoſt every ſpecies of atrocity; and that not only towards individuals, but nations, and nations the moſt peaceable and inoffenſive, whoſe only crime was that of being unable to reſiſt. Liberty has ſuffered more from the hands of infidels, amidſt all their ſucceſſes and declamations, than from its profeſſed enemies; and ſtill it bleeds beneath their wounds. Without entering into political diſputes, I may ſafely affirm, that if ever the nations of the earth be bleſſed with equal liberty, it will be by the prevalence, not of the pretended illuminations of infidel philoſophy, but of that doctrine which teaches us to *do unto others as we would that others ſhould do unto us.*

Finally: Mr. Paine affirms, that men, by becoming deiſts, would "live more conſiſtently and morally than "by any other ſyſtem." As to living more *conſiſtently*, it is poſſible there may be ſome truth in it; for the beſt Chriſtians, it muſt be allowed, have many imperfections, which are but ſo many inconſiſtencies; whereas, by complying with this advice, they would be *uniformly* wicked. And as to their living more *morally*, if Mr. Paine could coin a new ſyſtem of morals, from which the love of God ſhould be excluded, and intemperance, incontinency, pride, profane ſwearing, curſing, lying, and hypocriſy exalted to the rank of virtues, he might very probably make good his aſſertion.

Mr. Paine profeſſes to "deteſt the Bible on account "of its obſcene ſtories, voluptuous debaucheries, cruel "executions, and unrelenting vindictiveneſs."* That the Bible relates ſuch things, is true; and every impartial hiſtory of mankind muſt do the ſame. The queſtion is, Whether they be ſo related as to leave a favourable impreſſion of them upon the mind of a ſerious reader. If ſo, and if the Bible be that immoral book which Mr. Paine repreſents it to be, how is it

* Age of Reaſon, Part I. p. 12.

that the reading of it should have reclaimed millions from immorality? Whether he will acknowledge this or not, it is a fact too notorious to be denied by impartial observers. Every man residing in a Christian country will acknowledge, (unless he have an end to answer in saying otherwise) that those people who read the Bible, believe its doctrines, and endeavour to form their lives by its precepts, are the most sober, upright, and useful members of the community: and that those, on the other hand, who discredit the Bible, and renounce it as the rule of their lives, are, generally speaking, addicted to the grossest vices; such as profane swearing, lying, drunkenness, and lewdness. It is very singular, I repeat it, that men, by regarding an immoral book, should learn to practise morality; and that others, by disregarding it, should learn the contrary.

How is it, that in countries where Christianity has made progress, men have almost universally agreed in reckoning a true Christian, and an amiable, open, modest, chaste, conscientious, and benenevolent character, as the same thing? How is it, also, that to say of a man "he rejects the Bible," is nearly the same thing, in the account of people in general, as to say, he is a man of a dissolute life? If there were not a general connexion between these things, public opinion would not so generally associate them. Individuals, and even parties, may be governed by prejudice; but public opinion of character is seldom far from the truth. Besides, the prejudices of merely nominal Christians, so far as my observation extends, are equally strong, if not stronger, against those Christians who are distinguished by their devout and serious regard to the Scriptures, than against professed infidels. How is it, then, to be accounted for, that although they will call them fanatics, enthusiasts, and other unpleasant names, yet it is very rare that they reckon them immoral? If, as is sometimes the case, they accuse them of unworthy motives, and insinuate that in secret they are as wicked as others, either such insinuations are not seriously believed, or, if they be, the party is consider-

ed as insincere in his profession. No man thinks that genuine Christianity consists with a wicked life, open or secret. But the ideas of infidelity and immorality are associated in the public mind; and the association is clear and strong; so much so, as to become a ground of action. Whom do men ordinarily choose for umpires, trustees, guardians, and the like? Doubtless they endeavour to select persons of intelligence; but if to this be added *Christian principle*, is it not of weight in these cases? It is seldom known, I believe, but that a serious intelligent Christian, whose situation in the world renders him conversant with its concerns, will have his hands full of employment. Ask bankers, merchants, tradesmen, and others who are frequently looking out for persons of probity, whom they may place in situations of trust, in whose hands they would choose to confide their property? They might object, and with good reason, to persons whose religion rendered them pert, conceited and idle; but would they not prefer one who really makes the Bible the rule of his life, to one who professedly rejects it? The common practice in these cases affords a sufficient answer.

How is it that the principles and reasonings of infidels, though frequently accompanied with great natural and acquired abilities, are seldom known to make any impression on sober people? Is it not because the men and their communications are known?* How is

* It is said of a gentleman lately deceased, who was eminent in the literary world, that in early life he drank deeply into the free-thinking scheme. He and one of his companions, of the same turn of mind, often carried on their conversations in the hearing of a religious, but illiterate countryman. This gentleman, afterwards becoming a serious Christian, was concerned for the countryman, lest his faith in the Christian religion should have been shaken. One day he took the liberty to ask him, Whether what had so frequently been advanced in his hearing, had not produced this effect upon him? By no means, answered the countryman, it never made the least impression upon me. No impression upon you, said the gentleman! Why, you must know that we had read and thought on these things much more than you had any opportunity of doing. O yes, said the other; but I knew also your manner of living: I knew that to maintain such a course of conduct, you found it *necessary* to renounce Christianity.

it that so much is made of the falls of Noah, Lot, David, Jonah, Peter, and others? The same things in heathen philosophers, or modern unbelievers, would be passed over without notice. All the declamations of our adversaries on these subjects plainly prove that such instances with us are more *singular* than with them. With us they are occasional, and afford matter for deep repentance; and with them they are habitual, and furnish employment in the work of palliation. The spots on the garment of a child attract attention; but the filthy condition of the animal that wallows in the mire is disregarded, as being a thing of course.

The morality, such as it is, which is found among deists, amounts to nothing more than a little exterior decorum. The criminality of *intention* is expressly disowned.* The great body of these writers pretend to no higher motives than a regard to their safety, interest, or reputation. Actions proceeding from these principles must not only be destitute of virtue, but wretchedly defective as to their influence on the well-being of society. If the heart be towards God, a sober, righteous, and godly life, becomes a matter of choice: but that which is performed, not for its own sake, but from fear, interest or ambition, will extend no farther than the eye of man can follow it. In domestic life it will be but little regarded; and in retirement not at all. Such in fact is the character of infidels. "Will you dare to assert," says Linguet, a French writer, in an address to Voltaire, "that it is "in philosophic families we are to look for models of "filial respect, conjugal love, sincerity in friendship, "or fidelity among domestics? Were you disposed to "do so, would not your own conscience, your own "experience, suppress the falsehood, even before your "lips could utter it?"†

* Volney's Law of Nature, p. 18.

† Linguet was an admirer of Voltaire; but disapproved of his opposition to Christianity. See his *Review* of that author's works, page 264.

"Wherever ſociety is eſtabliſhed, there it is neceſſa-
"ry to have religion; for religion, which watches
"over the crimes that are ſecret, is, in fact, the only
"law which a man carries about with him; the only
"one which places the puniſhment at the ſide of the
"guilt; and which operates as forcibly in ſolitude and
"darkneſs, as in the broad and open face of day."
Would the reader have thought it? Theſe are the words of Voltaire.*

Nothing is more common than for deiſtical writers to level their artillery againſt the *Chriſtian miniſtry.* Under the appellation of *prieſts*, they ſeem to think themſelves at liberty to load them with every ſpecies of abuſe. That there are great numbers of worldly men who have engaged in the Chriſtian miniſtry, as other worldly men engage in other employments, for the ſake of profit, is true; and where this is the caſe, it may be expected that hunting, gaming, and ſuch kind of amuſements, will be their favourite purſuits, while religious exerciſes will be performed as a piece of neceſſary drudgery. Where this is the caſe, "their
"devotion muſt be feigned, and their ſerioufneſs mere
"hypocriſy and grimace." But that this ſhould be repreſented as a general caſe, and that the miniſtry itſelf ſhould be reproached on account of the hypocriſy of worldly men who intrude themſelves into it, can only be owing to malignity. Let the fulleſt ſubtraction be made of characters of the above deſcription, and I appeal to impartial obſervation, whether there will not ſtill remain, in only this particular order of Chriſtians, and at almoſt any period, a greater number of ſerious, upright, diſintereſted, and benevolent perſons, than could be found amongſt the whole body of deiſts in a ſucceſſion of centuries.

It is worthy of notice that Mr. Hume, in attempting to plunge Chriſtian miniſters into the mire of reproach, is obliged to deſcend himſelf, and to drag all mankind with him into the ſame ſituation. He repreſents min-

* In Sullivan's Survey of Nature.

isters "as drawn from the common mass of mankind, "as people are to other employments by the views of "profit;" and suggests that, "therefore, they are "obliged on many occasions, to feign more devotion "than they possess," which is friendly to hypocrisy.* The leading motive of all public officers, it seems, is to aggrandize themselves. If Mr. Hume had accepted of a station under government, we can be at no loss, therefore, in judging what would have been his predominant principle. How weak, as well as wicked, must that man have been, who, in order to wound the reputation of one description of men, could point his arrows against the integrity of all! But the world must forgive him. He had no ill design against them, any more than against himself. It was for the purpose of destroying these Philistines, that he has aimed to demolish the temple of human virtue.

Nor is his antipathy, or that of his brethren, at all to be wondered at: these are the men who, in every age, have exposed the sophistry of deists, and vindicated Christianity from their malicious aspersions. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that they will always be considered as their natural enemies. It is no more a matter of surprise that they should be the objects of their invective, than that the weapons of nightly depredators should be pointed against the watchmen, whose business it is to detect them, and expose their nefarious practices.

After all, Mr. Hume pretends to respect "*Clergy-*"*men* who are set apart by the laws to the care of "sacred matters;" and wishes to be understood as directing his censures only against *priests*, or those who pretend to power and dominion, and to a superior sanctity of character, distinct from virtue and good morals.† It should seem, then, that they are *dissenting* ministers only that incur Mr. Hume's displeasure; but if, as he represents them, they be "drawn to their

* Essay on National Characters, *Note.*

† Essays Mor. and Polit. Es. XII. p. 107, 108, *Note.*

"employment by the views of profit," they certainly cannot poſſeſs the common underſtanding of men, ſince they could ſcarcely purſue an occupation leſs likely to accompliſh their deſign. The truth is, Mr. Hume did not mean to cenſure diſſenting miniſters only; nor did he feel any reſpect to clergymen ſet apart by the laws. Thoſe whom he meant to ſpare were ſuch clergymen as were men after his own heart; and the objects of his diſlike were truly evangelical miniſters, whether churchmen or diſſenters, who were not ſatisfied with *his* kind of morality, but were men of holy lives, and conſequently were reſpected by the people. Theſe are the men againſt whom the enmity of deiſts has ever been directed. As to other prieſts, they have no other difference with them than that of rivalſhip, wiſhing to poſſeſs their wealth and influence, which the others are not always the moſt willing to relinquiſh. In profeſſing, however, to "reſpect" ſuch clergymen, Mr. Hume only means to flatter them, and draw them on to a little nearer alliance with his views. Reſpect is excited only by conſiſtency of character, and is frequently involuntary. A clergyman of looſe morals may be preferred, and his company courted, but *reſpected* he cannot be.

As to thoſe miniſters againſt whom Mr. Hume levels his artillery, and againſt whom the real enmity of his party has always been directed, there is not a body of men in the world, of equal talents and induſtry, who receive leſs, if ſo little, for their labours. If thoſe who have ſo liberally accuſed them of intereſted motives gained no more by their exertions than the accuſed, they would not be ſo wealthy as many of them are.

Compare the conduct of the leading men among deiſts with that of the body of ſerious Chriſtian divines. Amidſt their declamations againſt prieſtly hypocriſy, are they honeſt men? Where is their ingenuouſneſs in continually confounding Chriſtianity and Popery? Have theſe workers of iniquity no knowledge? 'No,' ſay ſome, 'they do not underſtand the

'difference between genuine and corrupted Chriſtian-
'ity. They have never had opportunity of viewing
'the religion of Jeſus in its native dreſs. It is popiſh
'ſuperſtition againſt which their efforts are directed.
'If they underſtood Chriſtianity they would embrace
'it.' Indeed? And was this the caſe with Shafteſ-
bury, Bolingbroke, Hume, or Gibbon? or is this the
caſe with Paine? No, they have both ſeen and hated
the light; nor will they come to it, leſt their deeds
ſhould be made manifeſt.

It may be thought, however, that ſome excuſe may be made for infidels reſiding in a popiſh country; and this I ſhall not diſpute, as it reſpects the ignorant populace, who may be carried away by their leaders: but as it reſpects the leaders themſelves, it is otherwiſe. The National Aſſembly of France, when they wiſhed to counteract the prieſts, and to reject the adoption of the Roman Catholic faith as the eſtabliſhed religion, could clearly diſtinguiſh between genuine and corrupted Chriſtianity.* Deiſts can diſtinguiſh between Chriſtianity and its abuſes, when an end is to be anſwered by it; and when an end is to be anſwered by it, they can, with equal facility, confound them.

"Herbert, Hobbes, Shafteſbury, Woolſton, Tindal,
"Chubb, and Bolingbroke are all guilty of the vile
"hypocriſy of profeſſing to love and reverence Chriſ-
"tianity, while they are employed in no other deſign
"than to deſtroy it. Such faithleſs profeſſions, ſuch
"groſs violations of truth, in Chriſtians, would have
"been proclaimed to the univerſe by theſe very writers
"as infamous deſertions of principle and decency. Is
"it leſs infamous in themſelves? All hypocriſy is de-
"teſtable; but I know of none ſo deteſtable as that
"which is coolly written, with full premeditation, by
"a man of talents, aſſuming the character of a moral
"and religious inſtructor. Truth is a virtue perfectly
"defined, mathematically clear, and completely un-
"derſtood by all men of common ſenſe. There can

* Mirabeau's Speeches, Vol. II. p. 269—274.

" be no haltings between uttering truth and falsehood; " no doubt, no mistakes, as between piety and enthu- " siasm, frugality and parsimony, generosity and pro- " fusion. Transgression therefore is always a known, " definite, deliberate villany. In the sudden moment " of strong temptation, in the hour of unguarded at- " tack, in the flutter and trepidation of unexpected " alarm, the best man may, perhaps, be surprised into " any sin: but he who can coolly, of steady design, and " with no unusual impulse, utter falsehood, and vend " hypocrisy, is not far from finished depravity."

" The morals of Rochester and Wharton need no " comment. Woolston was a gross blasphemer. " Blount solicited his sister-in-law to marry him, and " being refused, shot himself. Tindal was originally " a protestant, then turned papist, then protestant " again, merely to suit the times; and was at the " same time infamous for vice in general, and the " total want of principle. He is said to have died " with this prayer in his mouth, 'If there be a God, " I desire that he may have mercy on me.' Hobbes " wrote his *Leviathan* to serve the cause of Charles I. " but finding him fail of success, he turned it to " the defence of Cromwell, and made a merit of this " fact to the usurper; as Hobbes himself unblushing- " ly declared to Lord Clarendon. Morgan had no " regard to truth, as is evident from his numerous " falsifications of Scripture, as well as from the vile " hypocrisy of professing himself a Christian in those " very writings in which he labours to destroy Chris- " tianity. Voltaire in a letter now remaining, re- " quested his friend D'Alembert to tell for him a di- " rect and palpable lie, by denying that he was the " author of the Philosophical Dictionary. D'Alem- " bert, in his answer, informed him that he had told " the lie. Voltaire has indeed expressed his own moral " character perfectly in the following words: 'Mon- " sieur Abbe, I must be read, no matter whether I am " believed or not.' He also solemnly professed to be- " lieve the Catholic religion, although, at the same

"time, he doubted the existence of a God. Hume "died as a fool dieth. The day before his death he "spent in a pitiful and affected unconcern about this "tremendous subject, playing at whist, reading Lu- "cian's Dialogues, and making silly attempts at wit, "concerning his interview with Charon the heathen "ferry-man of Hades."*

Collins, though he had no belief in Christianity, yet qualified himself for civil office by partaking of the Lord's Supper. Shaftesbury did the same; and the same is done by hundreds of infidels to this day. Yet these are the men who are continually declaiming against the hypocrisy of priests! Godwin is not only a lewd character, by his own confession, but the unblushing advocate of lewdness. And as to Paine, he is well known to have been a profane swearer, and a drunkard. We have evidence upon oath that "Religion was his favour- "ite topic when intoxicated;"† and from the scurrility of the performance, it is not improbable that he was frequently in this situation while writing his *Age of Reason*.

I shall conclude this catalogue of worthies, with a brief abstract of the *Confessions* of J. J. Rousseau. After a good education, in the Protestant religion, he was put apprentice. Finding his situation disagreeable to him, he felt a strong propensity to vice; inclining him to covet, dissemble, lie, and at length to steal; a propensity of which he was never able afterwards to divest himself. "I have been a rogue," says he, "and am so still sometimes, for trifles which I had "rather take than ask for."‡

He abjured the Protestant religion, and entered the hospital of the Catechumens at Turin, to be instructed in that of the Catholics; "for which in return," says he, "I was to receive subsistence. From this interest- "ed conversion," he adds, "nothing remained but the

* The two last paragraphs are taken from Dr. Dwight's excellent Discourses on *The Nature and Danger of Infidel Philosophy*, p. 45—47.

† See Trial of T. Paine, at Guildhall for a libel, &c. p. 43.

‡ Confessions, London Ed. 1796, Vol. I. p. 52, 55, 68.

"remembrance of my having been both a dupe and "an apoſtate."*

After this he reſided with a Madame de Warrens, with whom "he lived in the greateſt poſſible familiar-"ity." This lady often ſuggeſted that there would be no juſtice in the Supreme Being, ſhould he be ſtrictly juſt to us; becauſe, not having beſtowed what was neceſſary to render us eſſentially good, it would be requiring more than he had given. She was nevertheleſs a very good Catholic, or pretended at leaſt to be one, and certainly deſired to be ſuch. If there had been no Chriſtian morality eſtabliſhed, Rouſſeau ſuppoſes ſhe would have lived as though regulated by its principles. All her morality, however, was ſubordinate to the principles of M. Tavel, (who firſt ſeduced her from conjugal fidelity by urging, in effect, that *expoſure* was the only crime) or rather ſhe ſaw nothing in religion that contradicted them. Rouſſeau was far enough from being of this opinion: yet he confeſſed he dared not combat the arguments of the lady; nor is it ſuppoſable he could, as he appears to have been acting on the ſame principles at the time. "Finding "in her," he adds, "all thoſe ideas *I had occaſion for* "to ſecure me from the fears of death, and its future "conſequences, I drew confidence and ſecurity from "this ſource."†

The writings of Port Royal, and thoſe of the Oratory, made him half a Janſeniſt; and notwithſtanding all his confidence, their harſh theory ſometimes alarmed him. A dread of hell, which till then he had never much apprehended, by little and little diſturbed his ſecurity, and had not Madame de Warrens tranquilized his ſoul, would at length have been too much for him. His confeſſor alſo, a Jeſuit, contributed all in his power to keep up his hopes.‡

After this he became familiar with another female, Thereſa. He began by declaring to her that he would

* Confeſſions, Vol. I. p. 125, 126.

† Vol. II. p. 88, 89, 103—106. ‡ Vol. II. p. 127.

never either abandon or marry her. Finding her pregnant with her first child, and hearing it observed in an eating-house that *he who had best filled the foundling hospital was always the most applauded*, "I said to myself, "quoth he, since it is the custom of the country, they "who live here may adopt it. I cheerfully determined upon it without the least scruple; and the only "one I had to overcome was that of Theresa; whom "with the greatest imaginable difficulty, I persuaded "to comply." The year following, a similar inconvenience was remedied by the same expedient: no more reflection on his part, nor approbation on that of the mother. "She obliged with trembling. My "fault," says he, "was great; but it was an error."*

He resolved on settling at Geneva; and on going thither, and being mortified at his exclusion from the rights of a citizen by the profession of a religion different from his forefathers, he determined openly to return to the latter. "I thought," says he, "the gos"pel being the same for every Christian, and the only "difference in religious opinions the result of the ex"planations given by men to that which they did not "understand, it was the exclusive right of the sove"reign power in every country to fix the mode of "worship, and these unintelligible opinions; and that "consequently it was the duty of a citizen to admit "the one, and conform to the other, in the manner "prescribed by the law." Accordingly at Geneva he renounced popery.†

After passing twenty years with Theresa, he made her his wife. He appears to have intrigued with a Madame de H——. Of his desires after that lady he says, "Guilty without remorse, I soon became so "without measure."‡

Such, according to his own account, was the life of uprightness and honour which was to expiate for a theft which he had committed when a young man,

* Confessions, Part II. Vol. I. p. 123, 154, 155, 183, 187, 315.

† Part II. Vol. I. p. 263, 264. ‡ Part II. Vol. I. p. 311, 328.

and laid it to a female ſervant, by which ſhe loſt her place and character.* Such was Rouſſeau, the man whom the rulers of the French nation have delighted to honour; and who, for writing this account, had the vanity and preſumption to expect the applauſe of his Creator. "Whenever the laſt trumpet ſhall ſound," ſaith he, "I will preſent myſelf before the ſovereign "Judge, with this book in my hand, and loudly pro- "claim, Thus have I acted—theſe were my thoughts "—ſuch was I. Power Eternal! aſſemble round thy "throne the innumerable throng of my fellow-mor- "tals. Let them liſten to my confeſſions; let them "bluſh at my depravity; let them tremble at my ſuf- "ferings; let each in his turn expoſe, with equal ſin- "cerity, the failings, the wanderings of his heart; "and, *if he dare*, aver, I WAS BETTER THAN THAT "MAN!"†

CHAP. VI.

Chriſtianity has not only produced good effects in thoſe who cordially believe it, but has given to the morals of ſociety at large, a tone, which Deiſm, ſo far as it operates, goes to counteract.

NO man walks through life without a rule of ſome kind, by which his conduct is directed, and his inclinations reſtrained. They who fear not God are influenced by a regard to the opinions of men. To avoid the cenſure, and gain the applauſe of the public, is the ſummit of their ambition.

Public opinion has an influence not only on the conduct of individuals in a community, but on the formation of its laws. Legiſlators will not only conform their ſyſtems to what the humours of the people will

* Confeſſions, Vol. I. p. 155, 160. † Vol. I. p. 1.

bear, but will themſelves incline to omit thoſe virtues which are the moſt ungrateful, and to ſpare thoſe vices which are moſt agreeable.

Nor is this all: So great is the influence of public opinion, that it will direct the conduct of a community againſt its own laws. There are obſolete ſtatutes, as we all know, the breach of which cannot be puniſhed: and even ſtatutes which are not obſolete, where they operate againſt this principle, have but little effect; witneſs the connivance at the atrocious practice of duelling.

Now if public opinion be ſo potent a principle, whatever has a prevailing influence in forming it, muſt give a decided tone to what are conſidered as the morals of a nation. I ſay *to what are conſidered* as the morals of a nation: for, ſtrictly ſpeaking, ſo much of the love of God and man, as prevails in a nation, ſo much morality is there in it, and no more. But as we can judge of love only by its expreſſions, we call thoſe actions moral, though it is poſſible, their morality may be only counterfeit, by which the love of God and man is ordinarily expreſſed. If we perform thoſe actions which are the ordinary expreſſions of love, from ſome other motive, our good deeds are thereby rendered evil in the ſight of him who views things as they are: nevertheleſs what we do, may be equally beneficial to ſociety as though we acted from the pureſt motive. In this indirect way, Chriſtianity has operated more than any thing that has been called by the name of religion, or by any other name, towards meliorating the ſtate of mankind.

It has been obſerved, and with great propriety, that in order to know what religion has done for an individual, we muſt conſider what he would have been without it. The ſame may be ſaid of a nation, or of the world. What would the nations of Europe have been at this time, if it had not been for the introduction of Chriſtianity? It cannot reaſonably be pretended that they would have been in any better ſituation, as to morality, than that which they were in previous

to this event; for there is no inſtance of any people having by their own efforts emerged from idolatry, and the immoralities which attend it. Now as to what that ſtate was, ſome notice has been taken already, ſo far as relates to the principles and lives of the old philoſophers. To this I ſhall add a brief review of the ſtate of ſociety amongſt them.

Great praiſes are beſtowed by Plutarch on the cuſtoms and manners of the Lacedemonians. Yet the ſame writer acknowledges that *theft* was encouraged in their children by a law; and that to "ſharpen their "wits, to render them crafty and ſubtle, and to train "them up in all ſorts of wiles and cunning, watchful-"neſs, and circumſpection, whereby they were more "apt to ſerve them in their wars, which was upon the "matter the whole profeſſion of this Commonwealth. "And if at any time they were taken in the act of "ſtealing, they were moſt certainly puniſhed with "rods, and the penance of faſting; not becauſe they "eſteemed the ſtealth criminal, but becauſe they want-"ed ſkill and cunning in the management and conduct "of it."* Hence, as might be expected, and as Herodotus obſerves, their actions were generally contrary to their words; and there was no dependence upon them in any matter.

As to their *chaſtity*, there were common baths in which the men and women bathed together; and it was ordered that the young maidens ſhould appear naked in the public exerciſes, as well as the young men, and that they ſhould dance naked with them at the ſolemn feſtivals and ſacrifices. Huſbands alſo were allowed to impart the uſe of their wives to handſome and deſerving men, in order to the producing of healthy and vigorous children for the Commonwealth.

Children which were deformed, or of a bad conſtitution were *murdered*. This inhuman cuſtom was common all over Greece; ſo much ſo that it was

* Plutarch's Morals, Vol. I. p. 96.

reckoned a ſingular thing among the Thebans, that the law forbade any Theban to expoſe his infant, under pain of death. This practice, with that of procuring abortion, were encouraged by Plato and Ariſtotle.

The unnatural *love of boys* was ſo common in Greece, that in many places it was ſanctioned by the public laws, of which Ariſtotle gives the reaſon, viz. to prevent their having too many children. Maximus Tyrius, celebrates it as a moſt ſingular heroic act of Ageſilaus, that being in love with a beautiful barbarian boy, he ſuffered it to go no farther than looking at him, and admiring him. Epictetus alſo praiſes Socrates in this manner: "Go to Socrates, and ſee him lying by Alci-"biades, yet ſlighting his youth and beauty. Conſider "what a victory he was conſcious of obtaining! What "an Olympic prize! So that, by heaven, one might "juſtly ſalute him, Hail incredibly great, univerſal "victor!" What an implication does ſuch language contain of the manners of thoſe times!

The Romans were allowed by Romulus to deſtroy all their female children, except the eldeſt; and even with regard to their male children, if they were deformed, or monſtrous, he permitted the parents to expoſe them, after having ſhewn them to five of their neareſt neighbours. Such things were in common uſe amongſt them, and were celebrated upon their theatres.

Such was their *cruelty* to their ſlaves, that it was not unuſual for the maſters to put ſuch of them as were old, ſick, and infirm, into an iſland in the Tiber, where they left them to periſh. So far did ſome of them carry their luxury and wantonneſs, as to drown them in the fiſh-ponds, that they might be devoured by the fiſh, to make the fleſh more delicate!

Gladiatory ſhows were common amongſt them; in which a number of ſlaves were engaged to fight for the diverſion of the multitude, till each one ſlew, or was ſlain by, his antagoniſt. Of theſe brutiſh exerciſes the people were extremely fond; even the women ran eagerly after them, taking pleaſure in ſeeing the

combatants kill one another, desirous only that they should fall genteelly, or in an agreeable attitude! They were exhibited at the funerals of great and rich men, and on many other occasions: so frequent did they become, that no war, it is said, caused such slaughter of mankind as did these sports of pleasure, throughout the several provinces of the Roman empire.

That odious and *unnatural* vice, which prevailed among the Greeks, was also common amongst the Romans. Cicero introduces, without any mark of disapprobation, Cotta, a man of the first rank and genius, freely and familiarly owning to other Romans of the same quality, that worse than beastly vice as practised by himself, and quoting the authorities of ancient philosophers in vindication of it. It appears also from Seneca, that in his time it was practised at Rome openly and without shame. He speaks of flocks and troops of boys, distinguished by their colours and nations, and that great care was taken to train them up for that detestable employment.

The religious rites performed in honour of Venus in Cyprus, and at Aphac on Mount Libanus, consisted in lewdness of the grossest kinds. The young people of both sexes crowded from all parts to those sinks of pollution, and filling the groves and temples with their shameless practices, committed whoredom by thousands, out of pure devotion.

All the Babylonian women were obliged to prostitute themselves once in their lives, at the temple of Venus or Mylitta, to the first man that asked them: and the money earned by this means was always esteemed sacred.

Human sacrifices were offered up in almost all heathen countries. Children were burnt alive, by their own parents, to Baal, Moloch, and other deities. The Carthaginians, in times of public calamity, not only burnt alive the children of the best families, to Saturn, and that by hundreds, but sometimes sacrificed themselves in the same manner in great numbers. Here

in Britain, and in Gaul, it was a common practice to ſurround a man with a kind of wicker-work, and burn him to death, in honour of their gods.*

In addition to the above, Mr. Hume has written as follows: "What cruel tyrants were the Romans over "the world during the time of their Commonwealth! "—It is true they had laws, to prevent oppreſſion in "their provincial magiſtrates; but Cicero informs us, "that the Romans could not better conſult the intereſt "of the provinces than by repealing theſe very laws. "For in that caſe," ſays he, "our magiſtrates having "entire impunity, would plunder no more than would "ſatisfy their own rapaciouſneſs; whereas at preſent "they muſt alſo ſatisfy that of their judges, and of all "the great men of Rome, of whoſe protection they "ſtand in need."

The ſame writer, who certainly was not prejudiced againſt them, ſpeaking of their Commonwealth, in its more early times, farther obſerves, "The moſt illuſtri- "ous period of the Roman hiſtory, conſidered in a "political view, is that between the beginning of the "firſt, and end of the laſt Punic war; yet at this very "time the horrid practice of *poiſoning* was ſo common, "that during part of a ſeaſon, a prætor puniſhed cap- "itally for this crime above *three thouſand* perſons, in "a part of Italy; and found informations of this na- "ture ſtill multiplying upon him! So depraved in pri- "vate life," adds Mr. Hume, "were that people, whom "in their hiſtory we ſo much admire."†

From the foregoing facts we may form ſome judgment of the juſtice of Mr. Paine's remarks. "We "know nothing," ſays he, "of what the ancient Gen- "tile world was before the time of the Jews, whoſe "practice has been to calumniate and blacken the

* The authorities on which this brief ſtatement of facts is founded may be ſeen in Dr. Leland's Advantages and Neceſſity of the Chriſtian Revelation, Vol. II. Part II. Chap. III. IV. where the ſubject is more particularly handled. See alſo Deiſm Revealed, Vol. I. p. 77, 78.

† Eſſay on Politics a Science.

"character of all other nations. As far as we know "to the contrary, they were a juſt and moral people, "and not addicted, like the Jews, to cruelty and re- "venge, but of whoſe profeſſion of faith we are un- "acquainted. It appears to have been their cuſtom "to perſonify both virtue and vice by ſtatues and im- "ages, as is done now-a-days by ſtatuary and paint- "ing: but it does not follow from this, that they wor- "ſhipped them any more than we do."*

Unleſs heathens, before the time of the Jews, were totally different from what they were in all after ages, there can be no reaſonable doubt of their worſhipping a plurality of deities, of which images were ſuppoſed to be the repreſentations. Mr. Paine himſelf allows, and that in the ſame performance, that prior to the Chriſtian era, they were, "I- "dolators, and had twenty or thirty thouſand gods."† Yet, by his manner of ſpeaking in this place, he manifeſtly wiſhes to inſinuate, in behalf of *all* the heathen nations, that they might worſhip idols no more than we do. It might be worth while for this writer, methinks, to beſtow a little more attention to the improvement of his memory.

With reſpect to their being "juſt and moral people," unleſs they were extremely different, before the time of the Jews, from what they were in all after ages, there can be no reaſonable doubt of their being what the ſacred writers have repreſented them. If thoſe writers have ſaid nothing worſe of them than has been ſaid by the moſt early and authentic hiſtorians from amongſt themſelves, it will be eaſy for an impartial reader to decide whether heathens have been "calumniated and "blackened" by the Jewiſh writers, or the Jewiſh writers by Mr. Paine.

But it is not by the ſtate of the *ancient* heathens only that we diſcover the importance of Chriſtianity. A large part of the world is ſtill in the ſame condition; and the ſame immoralities abound amongſt them which

* Age of Reaſon, Part II. p. 39, 40. † Page 5.

are reported to have abounded amongst the Greeks and Romans.

I am aware that deistical writers have laboured to hold up the modern as well as the ancient heathens in a very favourable light. In various anonymous publications much is said of their simplicity and virtue. One of them suggests, that the Chinese are so "superior to Christians in relation to moral virtues, that "it may seem necessary that they should send missionaries to teach us the use and practice of natural "theology, as we send missionaries to them to teach "them Revealed Religion."* Yea, and some who wish to rank as Christians, have, on this ground, objected to all missionary undertakings among the heathen. Let us examine this matter a little closely.

Almost all the accounts which are favourable to heathen virtue are either written by the adversaries of Christianity, and with a design to disparage it; or by navigators, and travellers, who have touched at particular places, and made their reports according to the treatment they have met with, rather than from a regard to universal righteousness. An authentic report of the morals of a people requires to be given, not from a transient visit, but from a continued residence amongst them; not from their occasional treatment of a stranger, but from their general character; and not from having an end to answer, but with a rigid regard to truth.

It is worthy of notice, that the far greater part of these representations respect people with whom we have little or no acquaintance; and therefore are less liable to contradiction, whatever the truth may be. As to China, Hindostan, and some other parts of the world, with whose moral state we have had the means of acquiring some considerable degree of knowledge, the praises bestowed on them by our adversaries have proved to be unfounded. From the accounts of those who have resided in China, there does not seem to be

* Christianity as old as the Creation, p. 366, 367.

much reaſon to boaſt of their virtue. On the contrary, their morals appear to be full as bad as thoſe of the ancient heathens. It is allowed they take great care of their outward behaviour, more than, perhaps, is taken in any other part of the world beſides; that whatever they do or ſay is ſo contrived that it may have a good appearance, pleaſe all, and offend none; and that they may excel in outward modeſty, gravity, good words, courteſy, and civility. But notwithſtanding this, it is ſaid that the ſin againſt nature is extremely common—that drunkenneſs is conſidered as no crime—that every one takes as many concubines as he can keep—that many of the common people pawn their wives in time of need; and ſome lend them for a month, or more, or leſs, according as they agree—that marriage is diſſolved on the moſt trifling occaſions—that ſons and daughters are ſold whenever their parents pleaſe, and that is frequently—that many of the rich as well as the poor, when they are delivered of daughters, ſtifle and kill them—that thoſe who are more tender-hearted will leave them under a veſſel, where they expire in great miſery—and finally, that notwithſtanding this, they all, except the learned, plead humanity and compaſſion againſt killing other living creatures, thinking it a cruel thing to take that life which they cannot give. Monteſquieu ſays, "The Chineſe, whoſe "whole life is governed by the eſtabliſhed rites, are "the moſt void of common honeſty of any people upon "earth; and that the laws, though they do not allow "them to rob or to ſpoil by violence, yet permit them "to cheat and defraud." With this agrees the account given of them in Lord Anſon's Voyages, and by other navigators, that lying, cheating, ſtealing, and all the little arts of chicanery abound amongſt them; and that if you detect them in a fraud, they calmly plead *the cuſtom of the country.** Such are the people by whom we are to be taught the uſe and practice of natural theology!

* See Leland's Advantage and Neceſſity of Revelation, Vol. II. Part II. Chap. IV.

If credit could be given to what ſome writers have advanced, we might ſuppoſe the moral philoſophy and virtuous conduct of the Hindoos to be worthy of being a pattern to the world. The rules by which they govern their conduct are, as we have been told, "Not to "tell falſe tales, nor to utter any thing that is untrue; "not to ſteal any thing from others, be it ever ſo little; "not to defraud any by their cunning in bargains, or "contracts; not to oppreſs any when they have power "to do it."*

Very oppoſite accounts, however, are given by numerous and reſpectable witneſſes, and who do not appear to have written under the influence of prejudice. I ſhall ſelect but two or three.

Francis Bernier, an intelligent French traveller, ſpeaking of the Hindoos, ſays, "I know not whether "there be in the world a more covetous and ſordid "nation. The Brahmins keep theſe people in their "errors and ſuperſtitions, and *ſcruple not to commit tricks "and villanies ſo infamous*, that I could never have be- "lieved them, if I had not made an ample inquiry into "them."†

Governor Holwell thus characteriſes them: "A "race of people, who, from their infancy, are utter "ſtrangers to the idea of common faith and honeſty.

"This is the ſituation of the bulk of the people of "Indoſtan, as well as of the modern Brahmins; "amongſt the latter, if we except one in a thouſand, "we give them over meaſure."

"The Gentoos in general are as degenerate, ſuper- "ſtitious, litigious, and wicked a people, as any race "of people in the known world, if not eminently more "ſo, eſpecially the common run of Brahmins; and "we can truly aver, that during almoſt five years that "we preſided in the Judicial Cutchery Court of Cal- "cutta, never any murder, or other atrocious crime

* Harris's Voyages and Travels, Vol. I. Chap. II. § xi. xii.

† Voyages de François Bernier, Tome I. p. 150, 162, et Tome II. p. 105.

"came before us, but it was proved in the end a "Brahmin was at the bottom of it."*

Mr. afterwards Sir John Shore, and governor-general of Bengal, ſpeaking of the ſame people, ſays, "A "man muſt be long acquainted with them before he "can believe them capable of that bare-faced falſe-"hood, ſervile adulation, and deliberate deception, "which they daily practiſe. It is the buſineſs of all, "from the Ryott to the Dewan, to conceal and de-"ceive; the ſimpleſt matters of fact are deſignedly "covered with a veil, through which no human un-"derſtanding can penetrate."†

In perfect agreement with theſe accounts are others which are conſtantly received from perſons of obſervation and probity, now reſiding in India. Of theſe the following are extracts: "Lying, theft, whoredom, "and deceit, are ſins for which the Hindoos are noto-"rious. There is not one man in a thouſand, who "does not make lying his conſtant practice. Their "thoughts of God are ſo very light, that they only "conſider him as a ſort of play-thing. Avarice and "ſervility are ſo united in almoſt every individual, that "cheating, juggling, and lying, are eſteemed no ſins "with them; and the beſt among them, though they "ſpeak ever ſo great a falſehood, yet it is not conſid-"ered as an evil, unleſs you firſt charge them to ſpeak "the truth. When they defraud you ever ſo much, "and you charge them with it, they coolly anſwer, *It "is the cuſtom of the country.*

"In England the poor receive the benefit of the "goſpel in being fed and clothed by thoſe who know "not by what principles they are moved. For when "the goſpel is generally acknowledged in a land, it "puts ſome to fear, and others to ſhame; ſo that to "relieve their own ſmart they provide for the poor: "but here, O miſerable ſtate! I have found the path-

* Holwell's Hiſtorical Events, Vol. I. p. 228, and Vol. II. p. 151.

† Parliamentary Proceedings againſt Mr. Haſtings, Appendix to Vol. II. p. 65.

" way ſtopped up by ſick and wounded people, periſh-
" ing with hunger; and that in a populous neighbour-
" hood, where numbers paſs by, ſome ſinging, others
" talking, but none ſhewing mercy; as though they
" were dying weeds, and not dying men."*

Comparing theſe accounts, a reader might be apt to ſuppoſe that the people muſt have greatly *degenerated* ſince their laws were framed; but the truth is, the laws are nearly as corrupt as the people. Thoſe who examine the Hindoo code,† will find them ſo; and will perceive that there is ſcarcely a ſpecies of wickedneſs which they do not tolerate, eſpecially in favour of the Bràmmhans, of which order of men, it may be preſumed, were the firſt framers of the conſtitution.

Let the reader judge from this example of the Hindoos, what degree of credit is due to antichriſtian hiſtorians, when they undertake to deſcribe the virtues of heathens.

From this brief ſtatement of facts it is not very difficult to perceive ſomewhat of that which Chriſtianity has accompliſhed with regard to the general ſtate of ſociety. It is by no means denied that the natural diſpoſitions of heathens as well as other men are various. The Scriptures themſelves record inſtances of their amiable deportment towards their fellow-creatures.‡ Neither is it denied that there are characters in chriſtianized nations, and that in great numbers, whoſe wickedneſs cannot be exceeded, nor equalled, by any who are deſtitute of their advantages. There is no doubt but that the general moral character of heathens is far leſs atrocious than that of deiſts, who reject the light of Revelation, and of multitudes of nominal Chriſtians who abuſe it. The ſtate of both theſe deſcriptions of men with reſpect to unenlightened pagans, is as that of Chorazin and Bethſaida with reſpect to Sodom and Gomorrha.

* Periodical Accounts of the Baptiſt Miſſion, No. II. p. 129. No. III. p. 191, 230. No. IV. p. 291.

† Tranſlated from the Shanſcrit, and publiſhed in 1773.

‡ Geneſis xxiii.

But that for which I contend is the effect of Chriſtianity upon *the general ſtate of ſociety*. It is an indiſputable fact that it has baniſhed groſs idolatry from every nation in Europe. It is granted that where whole nations were concerned, this effect might be at firſt accompliſhed, not by perſuaſion, but by force of arms. In this manner many legiſlators of former times thought they did God ſervice. But whatever were the means by which the worſhip of the one living and true God was at firſt introduced, it is a fact that the principle is now ſo fully eſtabliſhed in the minds and conſciences of men, that there needs no force to prevent the return of the old ſyſtem of Polytheiſm. There needs no greater proof of this than has been afforded by unbelievers of a neighbouring nation. Such evidently has been their predilection for pagan manners, that, if the light that has gone abroad amongſt mankind permitted it, they would at once have plunged into groſs idolatry, as into their native element. But this is rendered morally impoſſible. They muſt be theiſts, or atheiſts; polytheiſts they cannot be.

By accounts which, from time to time, have been received, it appears that the prevailing party in France have not only laboured to eradicate every principle of Chriſtianity, but, in one inſtance, actually made the experiment for reſtoring ſomething like the old idolatry. A reſpectable magiſtrate of the United States,* in his Addreſs to the Grand Jury in Luzerne county, has ſtated a few of theſe facts to the public.

"Infidelity," ſays he, "having got poſſeſſion of the "power of the ſtate, every nerve was exerted to efface "from the mind all ideas of religion and morality. "The doctrine of the immortality of the ſoul, or a "future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, ſo eſſential "to the preſervation of order in ſociety, and to the "prevention of crimes, was publickly ridiculed, and "the people taught to believe that death was an ever-"laſting ſleep.

* Judge Ruſh.

"They ordered the words 'Temple of Reaſon' to "be inſcribed on the churches, in contempt of the "doctrine of Revelation. Atheiſtical and licentious "homilies have been publiſhed in the churches in- "ſtead of the old ſervice, and a ludicrous imitation "of the Greek mythology exhibited under the title of "'The Religion of Reaſon.' Nay, they have gone "ſo far as to dreſs up a common ſtrumpet with the "moſt fantaſtic decorations, whom they blaſphemouſly "ſtyled 'The Goddeſs of Reaſon,' and who was car- "ried to church on the ſhoulders of ſome Jacobins "ſelected for the purpoſe, eſcorted by the national "guards and the conſtituted *authorities*. When they "got to the church, the ſtrumpet was placed on the "altar erected for the purpoſe, and harangued the "people, who, in return, profeſſed the deepeſt adora- "tion to her, and ſung the Carmagnole and other "ſongs, by way of worſhipping her. This horrid "ſcene, almoſt too horrid to relate, was concluded by "burning the prayer-book, confeſſional, and every "thing appropriated to the uſe of public worſhip: "numbers in the mean time danced round the flames "with every appearance of frantic and infernal mirth."

Theſe things ſufficiently expreſs the inclinations of the parties concerned, and what kind of bleſſings the world is to expect from atheiſtical philoſophy; but all attempts of this kind are vain. The minds of men throughout Europe, if I may for once uſe a cant term of their own, are too *enlightened* to ſtoop to the practice of ſuch fooleries. We have a gentleman in our own country who appears to be a ſincere devotee to the pagan worſhip, and who, it ſeems, would wiſh to introduce it; but as far as I can learn, all the ſucceſs which he has met with, is to have obtained from the public the honourable appellation of *the gentile prieſt*.

Whatever we are, and whatever we may be, groſs idolatry, I preſume, may be conſidered as baniſhed from Europe; and thanks be to God, a number of its attendant abominations, with various other immoral cuſtoms of the heathen, are in a good meaſure baniſh-

ed with it. We have no human sacrifices; no gladiatory combats; no public indecencies between the sexes; no law that requires prostitution; no plurality or community of wives; no dissolving of marriages on trifling occasions; nor any legal murdering of children, or of the aged and infirm. If unnatural crimes be committed amongst us, they are not common; much less are they tolerated by the laws, or countenanced by public opinion. On the contrary, the odium which follows such practices is sufficient to stamp with perpetual infamy the first character in the land. Rapes, incests, and adulteries, are not only punishable by law, but odious in the estimation of the public. It is with us, at least in a considerable degree, as it was in Judea, where he that was guilty of such vices was considered as *a fool in Israel.* The same, in less degrees, may be said of fornication, drunkenness, lying, theft, fraud, and cruelty; no one can live in the known practice of these vices, and retain his character. It cannot be pleaded in excuse with us, as it is in China, Hindostan, and Otaheite, that SUCH THINGS ARE THE CUSTOM OF THE COUNTRY.

We freely acknowledge that if we turn our eyes upon the great evils which still exist, even in those nations where Christianity has had the greatest influence, we find abundant reason for lamentation: but while we lament the evil, there is no reason that we should overlook the good. Comparing our state with that of former times, we cannot but with thankfulness acknowledge, *What hath God wrought!*

I can conceive of but one question that can have any tendency to weaken the argument arising from the foregoing facts, viz. *Are they the effects of Christianity?* If they be not, and can be fairly accounted for on other principles, the argument falls to the ground: but if they be, though Shaftesbury satirize, Hume doubt, Voltaire laugh, Gibbon insinuate, and Paine pour forth scurrility like a torrent, yet honest men will say, *An evil tree bringeth not forth good fruit: If this religion were not of God, it could do nothing.*

If there be any adequate cause distinct from Christianity to which these effects may be ascribed, it becomes our adversaries to state it. Meanwhile, I may observe, they are not ascribable to any thing besides Christianity that has borne the name of *Religion*. As to that of the ancient heathens, it had no manner of relation to morality. The priests, as Dr. Leland has proved, "made it not their business to teach men virtue."*

It is the same with modern heathens. Their religion has nothing of morality pertaining to it. They perform a round of superstitious observances, which produce no good effect whatever upon their lives. What they were yesterday they are to-day; no man repenteth himself of his wickedness, saying, What have I done! Nor is it materially different with Mahomedans. Their religion, though it includes the acknowledgment of one living and true God, yet, rejecting the Messiah as the Son of God, and attaching them to a bloody and lascivious impostor, produces no good effect upon their morals, but leaves them under the dominion of barbarity and voluptuousness. In short, there is no religion but that of Jesus Christ that so much as professes to *bless men by turning them from their iniquities*.

Neither can these effects be attributed to *philosophy*. A few great minds despised the idolatries of their countrymen; but they did not reform them: and no wonder; for they practised what they themselves despised. Nor did all their harangues in favour of virtue produce any substantial effect, either on themselves or others. The heathen nations were never more enlightened as to philosophy, than at the time of our Saviour's appearance; yet as to morality they never were more depraved.

It is Christianity then, and nothing else, which has destroyed the odious idolatry of many nations, and greatly contracted its attendant immoralities. It was in this way that the gospel operated in the primitive

* Advantage and Necessity of Revelation, Vol. II. p. 38.

ages, wherever it was received ; and it is in the same way that it continues to operate to the present time. Real Christians must needs be adverse to these things ; and they are the only men living who cordially set themselves against them.

This truth will receive additional evidence from an observation of the different degrees of morality produced in different places, according to the degree of purity with which the Christian religion has been taught, and liberty given it to operate. In several nations of Europe popery has long been established, and supported by sanguinary laws. By these means the Bible has been kept from the common people, Christian doctrine and worship corrupted, and the consciences of men subdued to a usurper of Christ's authority. Christianity is there in prison ; and anti-christianism exalted in its place. In other nations this yoke is broken. Every true Christian has a Bible in his family, and measures his religion by it. The rights of conscience also being respected, men are allowed to judge and act in religious matters for themselves, and Christian churches are formed according to the primitive model. Christianity is here at liberty ; here therefore it may be expected to produce its greatest effects. Whether this does not correspond with fact, let those who are accustomed to observe men and things with an impartial eye, determine.

In Italy, France, and various other countries, where the Christian religion has been so far corrupted as to lose nearly all its influence, illicit connexions may be formed, adulterous intrigues pursued, and even crimes against nature committed, with but little dishonour. Rousseau could here send his illegitimate offspring to the Foundling Hospital, and lay his accounts with being applauded for it, as being *the custom of the country*. It is not so in Britain, and various other nations, where the gospel has had a freer course : for though the same dispositions are discovered in great numbers of persons, yet the fear of the public frown holds them in awe. If we except a few abandoned characters, who have

nearly lost all sense of shame, and who by means either of their titles and fortunes on the one hand, or their well-known baseness on the other, have almost bid defiance to the opinion of mankind, this observation will hold good, I believe, as to the bulk of the inhabitants of protestant countries.

And it is worthy of notice, that in those circles or connexions where Christianity has had the greatest influence, a sobriety of character is carried to a much higher degree than in any other. Where there is one divorce from amongst protestant dissenters, and other serious professors of Christianity, there are, I believe, a hundred from amongst those whose practice it is to frequent the amusements of the theatre, and to neglect the worship of God. And in proportion to the singularity of such cases, such is the surprise, indignation, and disgrace which accompany them Similar observations might be made on public executions for robbery, forgery, tumults, assassinations, murders, &c. It is not amongst the circles professing a serious regard to Christianity, but amongst its adversaries, that these practices ordinarily prevail.

Some have been inclined to attribute various differences in these things to a difference in *national character:* but national character, as it respects morality, is formed very much from the state of society in different nations. A number of painful observations would arise from a view of the conduct and character of Englishmen on foreign shores. To say nothing of the rapacities committed in the East, Whither is our boasted humanity fled when we land upon the coasts of Guinea? The brutality with which millions of our fellow-creatures have been torn from their connexions, bound in irons, thrown into a floating dungeon, sold in the public markets, beaten, maimed, and many of them murdered, for trivial offences, and all this without any effectual restraint from the laws, must load our national character with everlasting infamy. The same persons, however, who can be guilty of these crimes at a distance, are as apparently humane as other people

when they re-enter their native country. And wherefore? Becauſe in their native country the ſtate of ſociety is ſuch as will not admit of a contrary behaviour. A man who ſhould violate the principles of juſtice and humanity here, would not only be expoſed to the cenſure of the laws, but, ſuppoſing he could evade this, his character would be loſt. The ſtate of ſociety in Guinea impoſes no ſuch reſtraints; in that ſituation, therefore, wicked men will indulge in wickedneſs. Nor is it much otherwiſe in our Weſt India iſlands. So little is there of Chriſtianity in thoſe quarters, that it has hitherto had ſcarcely any influence in the framing of their laws, or the forming of the public opinion. There are, doubtleſs, juſt and humane individuals in thoſe iſlands; but the far greater part of them, it is to be feared, are devotees to avarice; to which, as to a Moloch, one or other of them are continually offering up human victims.

Vicious practices are commonly more prevalent in large and populous cities than in other places. Hither the worſt characters commonly reſort, as noxious animals to a covert from their purſuers. In places but thinly inhabited, the conduct of individuals is conſpicuous to the community: but here they can aſſemble with others of their own deſcription, and ſtrengthen each other's hands in evil, without much fear of being detected. Chriſtianity, therefore, may be ſuppoſed to have leſs effect in the way of reſtraining immoral characters in the city, than in the country. Yet even here it is ſenſibly felt. The metropolis of our own nation, though it abounds with almoſt every ſpecies of vice, yet what reflecting citizen will deny that it would be much worſe but for the influence of the goſpel? As it is, there are numbers of different religious denominations, who conſtantly attend to public and family worſhip; who are as honourable in their dealings as they are amiable in domeſtic life; and as liberal in their benefactions as they are aſſiduous to find out deſerving caſes. The influence which this

body of men have upon the citizens at large, in reſtraining vice, promoting ſchemes of benevolence, and preſerving peace and good order in ſociety, is beyond calculation. But for their examples and unremitted exertions, London would be a Sodom in its guilt, and might expect to reſemble it in its puniſhment.

In country towns and villages it is eaſy to perceive the influence which a number of ſerious Chriſtians will have upon the manners of the people at large. A few families in which the Bible is daily read, the worſhip of God performed, and a Chriſtian converſation exemplified, will have a powerful effect. Whether characters of an oppoſite deſcription regard their conduct, or not, their conſciences favour it. Hence it is that one upright man, in a queſtion of right and wrong, will often put to ſilence a company of the advocates of unrighteouſneſs; and that three or four Chriſtian families have been known to give a turn to the manners of a whole neighbourhood.

In fine, let it be cloſely conſidered whether a great part of that ſobriety which is to be found *among deiſts themſelves* (as there are, doubtleſs, ſober characters among deiſts, and even among atheiſts) be not owing to Chriſtianity. It has often been remarked, and juſtly too, that much of the *knowledge* which our adverſaries poſſeſs, is derived from this ſource. To ſay nothing of the beſt ideas of the old philoſophers on moral ſubjects being derived from Revelation, of which there is conſiderable evidence, it is manifeſt that ſo far as the moderns exceed them, it is principally, if not entirely, owing to this medium of inſtruction. The Scriptures having diffuſed the light, they have inſenſibly imbibed it; and finding it to accord with reaſon, they flatter themſelves that *their* reaſon has diſcovered it. "After grazing," as one expreſſes it, "in the "paſtures of Revelation, they boaſt of having grown "fat by nature." And it is the ſame with regard to their ſobriety. So long as they reſide among people whoſe ideas of right and wrong are formed by the morality of the goſpel, they muſt, unleſs they wiſh to

be ſtigmatized as profligates, behave with ſome degree of decorum. Where the conduct is uniform and conſiſtent, charity, I allow, and even juſtice, will lead us to put the beſt conſtruction upon the motive; but when we ſee men uneaſy under reſtraints, and continually writing in favour of vices which they dare not openly practiſe, we are juſtified in imputing their ſobriety, not to principle, but to the circumſtances attending their ſituation. If ſome of thoſe gentlemen, who have deſerted the Chriſtian miniſtry, and commenced profeſſed infidels, had acted years ago as licentiouſly as they have done of late, they muſt have quitted their ſituation ſooner; and were they now to leave their country and connexions, and enter into ſuch a ſtate of ſociety as would comport with their preſent wiſhes, their conduct would be more licentious than it is.

On theſe principles that great and excellent man, Preſident WASHINGTON, in his farewel addreſs to the people of the United States, acknowledges the neceſſity of religion to the well-being of a nation. "Of all "the diſpoſitions and habits which lead to political "proſperity," he ſays, "religion and morality are in- "diſpenſable ſupports. In vain would that man claim "the tribute of patriotiſm, who ſhould labour to ſub- "vert theſe great pillars of human happineſs, theſe "firmeſt props of men and citizens. The mere poli- "tician, equally with the pious man, ought to reſpect "and to cheriſh them. A volume could not trace all "their connexions with private and public felicity. "Let it be ſimply aſked, where is the ſecurity for prop- "erty, for reputation, for life, if the ſenſe of religious "obligation deſert the oaths which are the inſtruments "of inveſtigation in the courts of juſtice? And let us "with caution indulge the ſuppoſition, that morality "can be maintained without religion. Whatever may "be conceded to the influence of refined education on "minds of peculiar ſtructure; reaſon and experience "both forbid us to expect that national morality can "prevail in excluſion of religious principle."

Upon the whole, the evidence of this chapter proves that Chriſtianity is not only a living principle of virtue in good men, but affords this farther bleſſing to ſociety, that it reſtrains the vices of the bad. It is a tree of life whoſe fruit is immortality, and whoſe very leaves are for the healing of the nations.

CHAP. VII.

Chriſtianity is a ſource of happineſs to individuals and ſociety: but Deiſm leaves both the one and the other without hope.

THOUGH the happineſs of creatures be not admitted to be the final end of God's moral goverment, yet it is freely allowed to occupy an important place in the ſyſtem. God is good; and his goodneſs appears in his having ſo blended the honour of his name with the felicity of his creatures, that in ſeeking the one they ſhould find the other. In ſo important a light do we conſider human happineſs, as to be willing to allow that to be the true religion which is moſt adapted to promote it.

To form an accurate judgment on this ſubject, it is neceſſary to aſcertain wherein happineſs conſiſts. We ought neither to expect nor deſire, in the preſent life, ſuch a ſtate of mind as wholly excludes painful ſenſations. Had we leſs of the exerciſes of godly ſorrow, our ſacred pleaſures would be fewer than they are: or were we unacquainted with the afflictions common to men, we ſhould be leſs able to ſympathize with them; which would be injurious not only to ſociety, but to ourſelves, as it would deprive us of one of the richeſt ſources of enjoyment.

Mr. Hume, in one of his Eſſays, very properly called *The Sceptic*, ſeems to think that happineſs lies in having one's inclinations gratified; and as different

men have different inclinations, and even the ſame men at different times, *that* may be happineſs in one caſe which is miſery in another. This ſceptical writer, however, would hardly deny that in happineſs, as in other things, there is a falſe and a true, an imaginary and a real; or that a ſtudied indulgence of the appetites and paſſions, though it ſhould promote the one, would deſtroy the other. The light of nature, as acknowledged even by deiſts, teaches that ſelf-denial, in many caſes, is neceſſary to ſelf-preſervation; and that to act a contrary part would be to ruin our peace, and deſtroy our health.* I preſume it will be granted that no definition of happineſs can be complete, which includes not peace of mind, which admits not of perpetuity, or which anſwers not the neceſſities and miſeries of human life.

But if nothing deſerve the name of happineſs which does not include *peace of mind*, all criminal pleaſure is at once excluded. Could a life of unchaſtity, intrigue, diſhonour, and diſappointed pride, like that of Rouſſeau, be a happy life? No; amidſt the brilliancy of his talents, remorſe, ſhame, conſcious meanneſs, and the dread of a hereafter, muſt corrode his heart, and render him a ſtranger to peace. Contraſt with the life of this man that of Howard. Pious, temperate, juſt, and benevolent, he lived for the good of mankind. His happineſs conſiſted in *ſerving his generation by the will of God.* If all men were like Rouſſeau, the world would be much more miſerable than it is: If all were like Howard, it would be much more happy. Rouſſeau, governed by the love of fame, is fretful and peeviſh, and never ſatisfied with the treatment he receives: Howard, governed by the love of mercy, ſhrinks from applauſe, with this modeſt and juſt reflection: "Alas, our beſt performances have ſuch a "mixture of ſin and folly, that praiſe is vanity, and "preſumption, and pain to a thinking mind." Rouſſeau, after a life of debauchery and ſhame, confeſſes it

* Volney's Law of Nature, p. 12.

to the world, and makes a merit of his confession, and even presumptuously supposes that it will avail him before the Judge of all: Howard, after a life of singular devotedness to God, and benevolence to men, accounted himself an unprofitable servant, leaving this for his motto, his last testimony, CHRIST IS MY HOPE. Can there be any doubt which of the two was the happiest man?

Further, If nothing amounts to real happiness which admits not of *perpetuity*, all natural pleasure, when weighed against the hopes and joys of the gospel, will be found wanting. It is an expressive characteristic of the good things of this life, that *they all perish with the using*. The charms of youth and beauty quickly fade. The power of relishing natural enjoyments is soon gone. The pleasures of active life, of building, planting, forming schemes, and achieving enterprizes soon follow. In old age none of them will flourish; and in death they are exterminated. *The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, the captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator*, all descend in one undistinguished mass into oblivion. And as this is a truth which no man can dispute, those who have no prospects of a higher nature, must often feel themselves unhappy. Contrast with this the joys of the gospel. These, instead of being diminished by time, are often increased. To them the soil of age is friendly. While nature has been fading, and perishing by slow degrees, how often have we seen faith, hope, love, patience, and resignation to God, in full bloom. Who but Christians can contemplate the loss of all present enjoyments with satisfaction? Who else can view death, judgment, and eternity, with desire? I appeal to the hearts of unbelievers, whether they have not many misgivings and revoltings within them; and whether in the hour of solitary reflection they have not sighed the wish of Balaam, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!*

It is obſervable that even Rouſſeau himſelf, though the language certainly did not become his lips, affected to derive conſolation in advanced life from Chriſtian principles. In a letter to Voltaire, he ſays, "I cannot help remarking, Sir, a very ſingular contraſt between you and me. Sated with glory, and undeceived with the inanity of worldly grandeur, you live at freedom, in the midſt of plenty, certain of immortality; you peaceably philoſophize on the nature of the ſoul; and if the body or the heart are indiſpoſed, you have Tronchin for your phyſician and friend. Yet with all this you find nothing but evil on the face of the earth. I, on the other hand, obſcure, indigent, tormented with an incurable diſorder, meditate, with pleaſure, in my ſolitude, and find every thing to be good. Whence ariſe theſe apparent contradictions? You have yourſelf explained them. You live in a ſtate of enjoyment, I in a ſtate of hope; and hope gives charms to every thing."*

Finally, If nothing deſerves the name of happineſs which *meets not the neceſſities, nor relieves the miſeries of human life*, Chriſtianity alone can claim it. Every one who looks into his own heart, and makes proper obſervations on the diſpoſitions of others, will perceive that man is poſſeſſed of a deſire after ſomething which is not to be found under the ſun—after A GOOD WHICH HAS NO LIMITS. We may imagine our deſires are moderate, and ſet boundaries beyond which we may flatter ourſelves we ſhould never wiſh to paſs; but this is ſelf-deception. He that ſets his heart on an eſtate, if he gain it, will wiſh for ſomething more. It would be the ſame if it were a kingdom; or even if all the kingdoms of the world were united in one. Nor is this deſire to be attributed merely to human depravity; for it is the ſame with regard to knowledge: the mind is never ſatisfied with its preſent acquiſitions. It is depravity that directs us to ſeek ſatisfaction in

* Works, Vol. IX. p. 336.

L. of C.

ſomething ſhort of God; but it is owing to the nature of the ſoul that we are never able to find it. It is not poſſible that a being created immortal, and with a mind capable of continual enlargement, ſhould obtain ſatiſfaction in a limited good. Men may ſpend their time and ſtrength, and even ſacrifice their ſouls in ſtriving to graſp it, but it will elude their purſuit. It is only from an uncreated ſource that the mind can drink its fill. Here it is that the goſpel meets our neceſſities. Its language is, *Ho, every one that thirſteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye ſpend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which ſatisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your ſoul delight itſelf in fatneſs. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your ſoul ſhall live. In the laſt day, that great day of the feaſt, Jeſus ſtood and cried, ſaying, If any man thirſt, let him come unto me and drink. He that cometh to me ſhall never hunger; and he that believeth in me ſhall never thirſt.** How this language has been verified, all who have made the trial can teſtify. To them, as to the only competent witneſſes, I appeal.

It is not merely the nature of the ſoul, however, but its depravity, from whence our neceſſities ariſe. We are ſinners. Every man who believes there is a God, and a future ſtate, or even only admits the poſſibility of them, feels the want of mercy. The firſt inquiries of a mind awakened to reflection will be, how he may eſcape the wrath to come; how he ſhall get over his everlaſting ruin? A heathen, previous to any Chriſtian inſtruction, exclaimed, in the moment of alarm, *What muſt I do to be ſaved?*† And ſeveral Mahomedans, being lately warned by a Chriſtian miniſter of their ſinful ſtate, came the next morning to him with this very ſerious queſtion, *Keman par hoibo*—"How "ſhall we get over?"‡ To anſwer theſe inquiries is

* Iſai. lv. 1, 2, 3. John vii. 37. vi. 35. † Acts xvi. 30.

‡ Periodical Accounts of the Baptiſt Miſſionary Society, No. IV, p. 326.

beyond the power of any principles but thoſe of the goſpel. Philoſophy may conjecture, ſuperſtition may deceive, and even a falſe ſyſtem of Chriſtianity may be aiding and abetting; each may labour to lay the conſcience aſleep, but none of theſe can yield it ſatisfaction. It is only by believing in Jeſus Chriſt, the great ſacrifice that taketh away the ſin of the world, that the ſinner obtains a relief which will bear reflection; a relief which, at the ſame time, gives peace to the mind, and purity to the heart. For the truth of this, alſo, I appeal to all who have made the trial.

Where, but in the goſpel, will you find relief under the innumerable ills of the preſent ſtate? This is the well known refuge of Chriſtians, are they poor, afflicted, perſecuted, or reproached? They are led to conſider Him who endured the contradiction of ſinners, who lived a life of poverty and ignominy, who endured perſecution and reproach, and death itſelf, for them; and to realize a bleſſed immortality in proſpect. By a view of ſuch things their hearts are cheered, and their afflictions become tolerable. Looking to Jeſus, who, for the joy ſet before him, endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and is now ſet down at the right hand of the throne of God, they run with patience the race that is ſet before them.

But what is the comfort of unbelievers? Life being ſhort, and having no ground to hope for any thing beyond it, if they be croſſed here they become inconſolable. Hence it is not uncommon for perſons of this deſcription, after the example of the philoſophers and ſtateſmen of Greece and Rome, when they find themſelves depreſſed by adverſity, and have no proſpect of recovering their fortunes, to put a period to their lives! Unhappy men! Is this the felicity to which ye would introduce us? Is it in guilt, ſhame, remorſe, and deſperation that ye deſcry ſuch charms? Admitting that our hope of immortality is viſionary, where is the injury? If it be a dream, is it not a pleaſant one? To ſay the leaſt, it beguiles many a melancholy hour, and can do no miſchief: but if it be a reality, what will become of you?

I may be told, that if many put a period to their lives through unbelief, there is an equal number who fall ſacrifices to religious melancholy. But to render this objection of force, it ſhould be proved that the religion of Jeſus Chriſt is the *cauſe* of this melancholy. Reaſon may convince us of the being of a God, and conſcience bear witneſs that we are expoſed to his diſpleaſure. Now if in this ſtate of mind the heart refuſe to acquieſce in the goſpel way of ſalvation, we ſhall, of courſe, either reſt in ſome deluſive hope, or ſink into deſpair. But here, it is not religion, but the want of it that generates the evil. It is unbelief, and not faith, that ſinks the ſinner into deſpondency. Chriſtianity diſowns ſuch characters. It records ſome few examples, ſuch as Saul, Ahithophel, and Judas: but they are all branded as apoſtates from God and true religion. On the contrary, the writings of unbelievers, both ancient and modern, are known to plead for ſuicide, as an expedient in extremity. Rouſſeau, Hume and others, have written in defence of it. The principles of ſuch men both produce and require it. It is the natural offſpring of unbelief, and the laſt reſort of diſappointed pride.

Whether Chriſtianity, or the want of it, be beſt adapted to relieve the heart under its various preſſures, let thoſe teſtify who have been in the habit of viſiting the afflicted poor. On this ſubject the writer of theſe ſheets can ſpeak from his own knowledge. In this ſituation characters of very oppoſite deſcriptions are found. Some are ſerious and ſincere Chriſtians; others, even among thoſe who have attended the preaching of the goſpel, appear neither to underſtand nor to feel it. The tale of woe is told, perhaps, by both: but the one is unaccompanied with that diſcontent, that wretchedneſs of mind, and that inclination to deſpair, which is manifeſt in the other. Often have I ſeen the cheerful ſmile of contentment under circumſtances the moſt abject and afflictive. Amidſt tears of ſorrow, which a full heart has rendered it impoſſible to ſuppreſs, a mixture of hope and

joy has gliſtened. "The cup which my Father hath "given me to drink, ſhall I not drink it?" Such have been their feelings, and ſuch their expreſſions; and where this has been the caſe, death has generally been embraced as the meſſenger of peace. *Here*, I have ſaid, participating of their ſenſations, *here is the patience, and the faith of the ſaints. Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jeſus. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jeſus is the Son of God?*

From individual happineſs let us proceed to examine that of *ſociety*. Let us inquire whether there be any well-grounded hope of the future melioration of the ſtate of mankind beſides that which is afforded by the goſpel. Great expectations have been raiſed of an end being put to wars, and of univerſal good-will pervading the earth, in conſequence of philoſophical illumination, and the prevalence of certain modes of civil government. But theſe ſpeculations proceed upon falſe data. They ſuppoſe that the cauſe of theſe evils is to be looked for in the ignorance, rather than in the depravity of men: or if depravity be allowed to have any influence, it is confined to the precincts of a court. Without taking upon me to decide which is the beſt form of civil government, or what mode is moſt adapted to promote the peace and happineſs of mankind, it is ſufficient, in this caſe, to ſhew that wars generally originate, as the apoſtle James ſays, in the luſts, or *corrupt paſſions* of mankind. If this be proved, it will follow, that however ſome forms of government may be more friendly to peace and happineſs than others, yet no *radical* cure can be effected till the diſpoſitions of men are changed. Let power be placed where it may, with one, or with many, ſtill it muſt be in the hands of men. If all governments were ſo framed as that every national act ſhould be expreſſive of the real will of the people, ſtill if the preponderating part of them be governed by pride and ſelf-love rather than equity, we are not much the nearer. Gov-

ernors taken from the common maſs of ſociety, muſt needs reſemble it. If there be any difference at the time of their firſt elevation to office, owing, as may be ſuppoſed, to the preference which all men give to an upright character for the management of their concerns, yet this advantage will be balanced, if not overbalanced, by the ſubſequent temptations to injuſtice which are afforded by ſituations of wealth and power.

What is the ſource of contentions in common life? Obſerve the diſcords in neighbourhoods and families; which, notwithſtanding all the reſtraints of relationſhip, intereſt, honour, law, and reaſon, are a fire that never ceaſes to burn; and which, were they no more controlled by the laws than independent nations from each other, would, in thouſands of inſtances, break forth into aſſaſſinations and murders. From whence ſpring theſe wars? Are they the reſult of *ignorance?* If ſo, they would chiefly be confined to the rude, or uninformed part of the community. But is it ſo? There may, it is true, be more pretences to peace and good-will, and fewer burſts of open reſentment in the higher, than in the lower orders of people: but their diſpoſitions are much the ſame. The laws of politeneſs can only poliſh the ſurface; and there are ſome parts of the human character which ſtill appear very rough. Even politeneſs has its regulations for ſtrife and murder, and eſtabliſhes iniquity by a law. The evil diſpoſition is a kind of ſubterraneous fire; and it will have vent in ſome form. Are they the reſult of *court influence?* No. The truth is, if civil government in ſome form did not influence the fears of the unjuſt and contentious part of the community, there would be no ſecurity to thoſe who are peaceably inclined, and eſpecially to thoſe who are withal religious, and whoſe pious conduct, like that of Noah, condemns the world. Now, the ſame diſpoſition which in perſons whoſe power extends only to a cottage, will operate in a way of domeſtic diſcord, in others, whoſe influence extends to the affairs of nations, will operate on a more en-

larged ſcale; producing war and all the dire calamities which attend it. The ſum of the whole is this: when the preponderating part of the world ſhall ceaſe to be proud, ambitious, envious, covetous, lovers of their own ſelves, falſe, malignant, and intriguing; when they ſhall love God and one another out of a pure heart; then, and not till then, may we expect wars to ceaſe, and the ſtate of mankind to be eſſentially meliorated. While theſe diſpoſitions remain, they will be certain to ſhew themſelves. If the beſt laws or conſtitution in the world ſtands in their way, they will, on certain occaſions, bear down all before them.

An anonymous writer in the Monthly Magazine,* (a work which without avowing it, is pretty evidently devoted to the cauſe of infidelity) has inſtituted an inquiry into "the probability of the future melioration of "the ſtate of mankind." A diſmal proſpect indeed it is which he holds up to his fellow-creatures; yet were I an infidel, like him, I ſhould acquieſce in many things which he advances. The anchor of his hopes is *an increaſe of knowledge*, and the effects of this are circumſcribed within a very narrow boundary. With reſpect to what we call *civilization*, he reckons it to have undergone all the viciſſitudes of which it is capable. *Scientific refinement* may contribute to the happineſs of a few individuals, but he fears cannot be made a ground of much advantage to the maſs of mankind. Great ſcope indeed remains for the operation of increaſed knowledge in improvement in *government*: but even here it can only cure thoſe evils which ariſe from ignorance, and not thoſe which proceed from intention, which, "while "the propenſity to prefer our own intereſts above that "of the community is, as he acknowledges, interwoven "into our very nature," will always form the maſs of exiſting ills. If indeed the majority of a community, he ſays, became ſo enlightened concerning their intereſts, and ſo wiſe, ſteady, and unanimous in the purſuit of them, as to overcome all that reſiſtance which the

* For February, 1799, p. 9.

poſſeſſors of undue advantages will always make to a change unfavourable to themſelves, ſomething might be hoped for. But this, while they are under their old maſters, he reckons as next to impoſſible. As to *political revolutions*, he did form high expectations from them; but his hopes are at an end. "I have only "the wiſh left," ſays he, "the confidence is gone." As to *improved ſyſtems of morality*, which he conſiders as the art of living happy, though it might ſeem promiſing, yet hiſtory, he very juſtly remarks, does not allow us to expect that men in proportion as they advance in this ſpecies of knowledge, will become more juſt, more temperate, or more benevolent. Of the *extinction of wars*, he has no hope. The new order of things which ſeemed opening in Europe, and to bid fair for it, has rather increaſed the evil; and as to *Chriſtianity*, it has been tried, it ſeems, and found to be inſufficient for the purpoſe. *Commerce*, inſtead of binding the nations in a golden chain of mutual peace and friendſhip, ſeems only to have given additional motives for war.

The amount is, there is little or no hope of the ſtate of mankind being meliorated on *public* principles. All the improvement he can diſcern in this way conſiſts in there being a little more lenity in the government of ſome countries than formerly; and as to this, it is balanced by the prodigious increaſe of ſtanding armies, and other national burdens.

The only way in which *an increaſe of knowledge* is to operate to the melioration of the ſtate of mankind, is in *private life.* It is to ſoften and humanize men's manners, and emancipate their minds from the ſhackles of ſuperſtition and bigotry, names which writers of this claſs commonly beſtow upon Chriſtianity. This is the boundary beyond which, whatever be his wiſhes, the hopes of this writer will not ſuffer him to paſs; and even this reſpects only Europe and her immediate connexions, and not the whole of them. The great maſs of mankind are in an abſolutely hopeleſs condition: for there are no means of carrying our improvements

among them but by conqueſt, and conqueſt is a Pandora's box, at the mention of which he ſhudders.

Such are the proſpects of unbelievers; ſuch is the horrid deſpondency under which they ſink when Providence counteracts their favourite ſchemes; and ſuch the ſpirit which they take pains to infuſe into the minds of men in order to make them happy! Chriſtian reader, Have you no better hopes than theſe? Are you not acquainted with a principle, which, like the machine of Archimedes, will remove this mighty maſs of evils? Be they as great and as numerous as they may, if all can be reduced to a ſingle cauſe, and that cauſe removed, the work is done. All the evils of which this writer complains, are reducible to that one principle, which he ſays, (and 'tis well *he* ſays it) "is "interwoven into our very nature; namely, the pro- "penſity to prefer our own intereſts above that of the "community." It is this propenſity that operates in the great, and induces them to "oppoſe every thing "that would be unfavourable to their power and ad- "vantage;" and the ſame thing operates among common people; great numbers of whom, it is well known, would ſell their country for a piece of bread. If this principle cannot be removed, I ſhall, with this writer, forever deſpair of any eſſential changes for the better, in the ſtate of mankind, and will content myſelf with cultivating private and domeſtic happineſs, and hoping for the bleſſedneſs of a future life: but if it can, I muſt leave him to deſpair alone.

My hopes are not founded on forms of government, nor even on an increaſe of knowledge, though each may have its value; *but on the ſpirit by which both the rulers and the people will be governed.* All forms of government have hitherto reſted on the baſis of *ſelf-love.* The wiſeſt and beſt ſtateſmen have been obliged to take it for granted that the maſs of every people will be governed by this principle; and conſequently all their ſchemes have been directed to the balancing of things in ſuch a manner, as that people in purſuing their own intereſt ſhould promote that of the public.

If in any caſe they have preſumed on the contrary, experience has ſoon taught them that all their ſchemes are viſionary, and inapplicable to real life. But if the maſs of the people, compoſed of all the different orders of ſociety, were governed by a ſpirit of juſtice and diſintereſted benevolence, ſyſtems of government might ſafely be formed on this baſis. It would then be ſufficient for ſtateſmen to aſcertain what was right, and beſt adapted to promote the good of the community, and the people would cheerfully purſue it; and purſuing this, would find their own good more effectually promoted than by all the little diſcordant arts of a ſelfiſh mind.

The excellence of the moſt admired conſtitutions which have hitherto appeared in the world, has chiefly conſiſted in the balance of power being ſo diſtributed amongſt the different orders of ſociety, as that no one ſhould materially oppreſs or injure the other. They have endeavoured to ſet boundaries to each other's encroachments, and contrived in ſome degree to counteract venality, corruption, and tumult. But all this ſuppoſes a corrupt ſtate of ſociety, and amounts to no more than making the beſt of things, taking them as they are. Locks, and keys, and bolts, and bars are neceſſary in our houſes as things are; but it were better if there were no occaſion for them. I do not take upon me to ſay that things will ever be in ſuch a ſtate as that there ſhall be no need of theſe political precautions; but I believe they will be far leſs neceſſary than they now are.

If the Bible be true, the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the ſea; the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Chriſt; idolatry, and every ſpecies of falſe religion, ſhall be no more; the art and inſtruments of war ſhall be laid aſide, and exchanged for thoſe of huſbandry; the different tribes of men ſhall be united in one common band of brotherly love; ſlavery and oppreſſion will ceaſe; righteouſneſs will be eſtabliſhed in the earth: and the work of righteouſneſs ſhall be

peace, and the effect of righteouſneſs, quietneſs and aſſurance forever.

But "Chriſtianity has been tried, it ſeems, and found "inſufficient." That it has not been as yet ſufficient to baniſh unjuſt wars from the earth, is true; and it were more than wonderful if it had, ſeeing it has never yet been cordially embraced by the majority, nor perhaps by the preponderating part of any nation. Nevertheleſs it has had its influence. This gloomy writer himſelf acknowledges that the ſtate of ſociety in Europe and America, that is to ſay in Chriſtendom, is far preferable to what it is in other parts of the earth. Of the reſt of the world he has no hope. Has Chriſtianity done nothing in this caſe? That thouſands in different nations are, by a cordial belief of it, rendered ſober, juſt, diſintereſted, and peaceable; and that the ſtate of ſociety at large is greatly meliorated, has been proved, I hope, already;* to believe then in the future accompliſhment of the foregoing prophecies is only to believe that what is already effected in individuals will be extended to the general body of mankind, or, at leaſt, to ſuch a proportion of them as ſhall be ſufficient to give a preponderance in human affairs.

Moreover, the ſame book which declares that *the kingdoms of this world ſhall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Chriſt*, has foretold, in a great variety of language, the downfal of the Papal Antichriſt, and that by means of the ſame powers from which its dominion was firſt derived. We have in part ſeen the fulfilment of the one, and live in expectation of the other. We are not ignorant of the evil deſigns of infidels, but we believe that God is above them, and that they are only inſtruments in his hand in the fulfilment of his word. While, therefore, we feel for the miſeries of mankind, occaſioned by the dreadful devaſtations of war, we ſorrow not as thoſe who have no hope; but are perſuaded that all things, even now, are working together for good; and while we pity

* Chap. V. VI.

individual sufferers, we cannot join the whining lamentations of interested men, *Alas, alas, that great city!* On the contrary, we feel disposed to join the song of the heavenly host, *Amen, Alleluia! Salvation, and honour, and glory, and power be unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments—Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his bride hath made herself ready.*

If, according to the doctrine of Bolingbroke, Volney, and other deists, we knew no other source of virtue and happiness than *self-love*, we should often be less happy than we are. Our blessedness is bound up with that of Christ and his followers throughout the world. His friends are our friends, and his enemies our enemies. They that seek his life, seek ours. The prosperity of his kingdom is our prosperity; and we prefer it above our chief joy. From the public stock of blessedness, being thus considered as the common property of every individual, arises a great and constant influx of enjoyment. Hence it is that in times when temporal comforts fail us, or family troubles depress us, or a cloud hangs over our particular connexions, or death threatens to arrest us in a course of pleasing labour, we have still our resources of consolation. 'Affairs with me are sinking; but *he must increase*'.—'My house is not so with God; but the kingdom of my Lord shall be established forever.'—His interest sinks in this congregation; but it rises elsewhere!—'I die: but God will surely visit you!' Such is the heritage of the servants of the Lord; and such the blessedness of those whose chief desire it is, *that they may see the good of his chosen; that they may rejoice in the gladness of his nation; and that they may glory with his inheritance.*

THE

GOSPEL ITS OWN WITNESS, &c.

PART II.

IN WHICH THE HARMONY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IS CONSIDERED AS AN EVIDENCE OF ITS DIVINITY.

IF Chriſtianity be an impoſture, it may, like all other impoſtures, be detected. Falſehood may always be proved to claſh with fact, with reaſon or with itſelf; and often with them all. If, on the contrary, its origin be divine, it may be expected to bear the character of conſiſtency, which diſtinguiſhes every other divine production. If the Scriptures can be proved to harmonize with hiſtoric fact, with truth, with themſelves, and with ſober reaſon; they muſt, conſidering what they profeſs, be divinely inſpired, and Chriſtianity muſt be of God.

CHAP. I.

The harmony of Scripture with hiſtoric fact, evinced by the fulfilment of prophecy.

IF the pretence which the Scriptures make to divine inſpiration be unfounded, it can be no very difficult undertaking to prove it ſo. The ſacred writers, beſides abounding in hiſtory, doctrine, and morality, have

dealt largely in prophecy; and this not in the manner of the heathen priests, who made use of dark and dubious language. Their meaning in general is capable of being understood, even at this distance of time; and in many instances cannot be mistaken. The dispute, therefore, between believers and unbelievers is reducible to a short issue. If Scripture prophecy be divinely inspired, it will be accomplished; but if it be imposture, it will not.

Let us suppose that, by digging in the earth, a chest were discovered, containing a number of ancient curiosities, and among other things, a tablet, inscribed with calculations of the most remarkable eclipses that should take place for a great while to come. These calculations are examined, and found to correspond with fact for more than two thousand years past. The inspectors cannot agree perhaps in deciding who was the author, whether it had not gone through several hands when it was deposited in the chest, and various other questions: but does this invalidate the truth of the calculations, or diminish the value of the tablet?

It cannot be objected that events have been predicted from mere political foresight, which have actually come to pass: for though this may have been the case in a few instances, wherein causes have already existed which afforded ground for the conclusion; yet it is impossible that the successive changes and revolutions of empires, some of which were more than a thousand years distant, and depended on ten thousand unknown incidents, should be the objects of human speculation.

Mr. Paine seems to feel the difficulty attending his cause on this subject. His method of meeting it is not by soberly examining the agreement or disagreement of prophecy and history; that would not have suited his purpose: but, as though he had made a wonderful discovery, he in the first place goes about to prove that the prophets wrote *poetry*; and from hence would persuade us that a prophet was no other than an ancient Jewish bard. That the prophecies are what is now called po-

etic, Mr. Paine need not have given himself the trouble to prove, as no person of common understanding can doubt it; but the question is, did not these writings, in whatever kind of language they were written, contain *predictions of future events;* yea, and of the most notorious and remarkable events, such as should form the grand outlines of history in the following ages? Mr. Paine will not deny this: nor will he soberly undertake to disprove that many of those events have already come to pass. He will, however, take a shorter method; a method more suited to his turn of mind. He will call the prophets "impostors and liars:" he will roundly assert, without a shadow of proof, and in defiance of historic evidence, that the prediction concerning Cyrus was written after the event took place: he will labour to pervert and explain away some few of the prophecies, and get rid of the rest by calling the writer "a false "prophet," and his production "a book of falsehoods."* These are weapons worthy of Mr. Paine's warfare. But why all this rage against an ancient bard? Just now a prophet was only a poet, and the idea of a predictor of future events was not included in the meaning of the term. It seems, however, by this time, that Mr. Paine has found a number of *predictions* in the prophetic writings, to get rid of which he is obliged, as is usual with him in cases of emergency, to summon all his talents for misrepresentation and abuse.

I take no particular notice of this writer's attempts to explain away a few of the predictions of Isaiah, and other prophets. Those who have undertaken to answer him, have performed this part of the business. I shall only notice that he has not dared to meet the great body of Scripture prophecy, or fairly to look it in the face.

To say nothing of the predictions of the destruction of mankind by a flood; of that of Sodom and Gomorrha by fire; of the descendants of Abraham being put in possession of Canaan within a limited period;

* Age of Reason, Part II. p. 44, 47.

and of various other events, the history as well as prophecy of which is confined to the Scriptures ; let us review those predictions, the fulfilment of which has been recorded by historians who knew nothing of them, and consequently could have no design in their favour.

It is worthy of notice, that sacred history ends where profane history, that part of it at least which is commonly reckoned authentic, begins. Prior to the Babylonish captivity, the scriptural writers were in the habit of narrating the leading events of their country, and of incidentally introducing those of the surrounding nations : but shortly after this time the great changes in the world began to be recorded by other hands, as Herodotus, Xenophon, and others. From this period they dealt chiefly in prophecy, leaving it to common historians to record its fulfilment.

Mr. Paine says the Scripture prophecies are "a book "of falsehoods." Let us examine this charge. Isaiah, above a hundred years before the captivity, predicted the destruction of the Babylonish empire by the Medes and Persians, and Judah's consequent deliverance. *The plunderer is plundered, and the destroyer is destroyed : Go up, O Elam : besiege, O Media : all the crying thereof have I made to cease.** Ask Herodotus and Xenophon : Was this a falsehood ?

Daniel, fourteen years before the establishment of the Medo-Persian dominion by the taking of Babylon, described that dominion, with its conquests, and the superiority of the Persian influence to that of the Median, under the symbol of a ram with two horns. *I lifted up mine eyes and saw, and behold there stood by the river a ram, which had two horns ; and the two horns were high, and the higher came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward ; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand ; but he did according to his will, and became great.*

* Lowth's translation of Isaiah, xxi. 2. Other prophecies of the same event may be seen in Isai. xiii. xiv. xxi. xliii. 14—17. xliv. 28. xlv. 1—4. xlvii. Jer. xxv. 12—26. l. li. Hab.

This is expounded as follows: *The ram which thou ſaweſt having two horns are the kings of Media and Perſia.** Aſk the afore-mentioned hiſtorians: Was this a falſehood?

The ſame Daniel, at the ſame time, two hundred and twenty-three years before the event, predicted the overthrow of this Medo-Perſian dominion, by the arms of Greece, under the command of Alexander; and deſcribed the latter government under the ſymbol of a he-goat, with a notable horn between his eyes. *As I was conſidering, behold a he-goat came from the weſt, on the face of the whole earth, and he touched not the ground. And the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had ſeen ſtanding by the river and ran unto him in the fury of his power. And I ſaw him come cloſe unto the ram, and he was moved with choler againſt him, and ſmote the ram, and brake his two horns. And there was no power in the ram to ſtand before him; but he caſt him down to the ground, and ſtamped upon him; and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand.* The expoſition of this viſion follows: *The rough goat is the kingdom or power of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the firſt king.*† Aſk Diodorus Siculus, Plutarch, and other hiſtorians of thoſe times: Was this a falſehood?

The ſame Daniel, at the ſame time, two hundred and thirty years before the event, predicted the death of Alexander, and the diviſion of his empire amongſt four of his principal commanders, each of whom had an extenſive dominion. *The he-goat waxed very great: and when he was ſtrong the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones towards the four winds of heaven.* The interpretation of this was as follows: *Now the great horn being broken, whereas four ſtood up for it, four kingdoms ſhall ſtand up out of the nation, but not in his power.*‡ Aſk the afore-mentioned hiſtorians of thoſe times: Was this a falſehood?

* Dan. viii. 3, 4, 20. See alſo on the ſame ſubject, Chap. vii. 5.

† Dan. viii. 5—7, 21. See alſo on the ſame ſubject, Chap. xi. 2, 3, 4.

‡ Dan. viii. 8, 22. See alſo on the ſame ſubject, Chap. vii. 6.

The same Daniel, at the same time, three hundred and eighty years before the event, foretold the outrageous reign and sudden death of Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria: particularly, that by flattery and treachery he should accomplish his end; and, on account of the degeneracy of the Jews, should be permitted for a time to ravage their country, interrupt their ordinary course of worship, profane their temple, and persecute even to death those who refused to comply with his heathen abominations: but that in the midst of his career he should be cut off by a sudden visitation from heaven. *And out of one of them* (the four branches of the Grecian empire) *came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. And it waxed great even to the host of heaven: and it cast down some of the host, and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And a host was given him against the daily sacrifice, by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised and prospered.* Of this the following is the exposition: *In the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: and he shall also stand up against the prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.*

Daniel also foretels, in the eleventh chapter of his prophecies, the wars between this king of Syria and Ptolemy Philometer, king of Egypt; with the interposition of the Romans, whose ambassador should come over in *ships from Chittim*, and compel him to desist: also that being thus disappointed of his object in Egypt, he should return full of wrath and indignation

to his own land, and wreak his vengeance upon the Jews, whose country lay in his way, though they had done nothing to offend him. I will not say, ask Josephus, Diodorus Siculus, and Polybius, if these were falsehoods; ask Porphyry, a professed enemy to the Holy Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, and who wrote against them about the middle of the third century. He has proved from the testimony of six or seven historians of those times, that these predictions were all exactly fulfilled: and like Mr. Paine, by the prophecies concerning Cyrus, is driven, *merely on account of their being true*, to fly in the face of historic evidence, and maintain that they could not be the production of Daniel, but must have been written by some Jew after the events took place.*

As in the eighth and eleventh chapters of his prophecies Daniel has foretold the Persian and Grecian governments, with the subdivisions of the latter, and how they should affect the Jewish people; so in the seventh chapter he has, in connexion with them, foretold the government of Rome. This singular empire he represents as exceeding all that had gone before it, in power and terror; and as that of Greece, soon after the death of Alexander, should be divided into four kingdoms, signified by the four heads of the third beast, so this it is foretold, should be, at the time of its dissolution, divided into ten kingdoms, which are signified by the ten horns of the fourth beast. Ask universal history: Is this a falsehood? Those who adopt the cause of Porphyry must in this instance desert his hypothesis: they cannot say that this part of the prophecy was written by some Jew after the event took place, seeing Porphyry himself has acknowledged its existence some hundreds of years before it was accomplished.

The predictions of this prophet did not end here: he at the same time foretold that there should arise among the ten kingdoms, into which the Roman em-

* See Prideaux's Connexion, Part I. Book II. VIII. Part II. Book III. where the accomplishment of all the foregoing events is clearly narrated, and the authorities cited.

pire should be broken, a power diverse from all the rest; *a little horn* which should *speak great words against the Most High, and wear out the saints of the Most High*; and that this power should continue until *a time, and times, and the dividing of time.* At the end of this period, he adds, *the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy unto the end.* Are these falsehoods? Let the history of the last twelve hundred years, and the present state of the Papal hierarchy, determine.

Passing over the predictions of the Messiah, whose birth, place of nativity, time of appearance, manner of life, doctrine, miracles, death and resurrection, were each particularly pointed out,* let us examine a few examples from the New Testament. Our Lord Jesus Christ foretold the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and limited the time of its accomplishment to the then *present generation* † Ask Josephus, the Jewish historian: Is this a falsehood?

It was intimated at the same time, that the Jewish people should not only fall by the edge of the sword, but that great numbers of them should be *led away captive into all nations*; and that *Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled.*‡ Ask the present descendants of that unhappy people: Is this a falsehood?

The apostle of the Gentiles foretold that there should be *a falling away*, or a grand apostasy in the Christian church; wherein *the man of sin should be revealed, even the son of perdition; who would oppose, and exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; and who as God would sit in the temple of God, shewing himself to be God.*§ Also in his epistle to Timothy; *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall give heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;*

* Isai. ix. 6. Mic. v. 2. Dan. ix. 20—27. Isai. xlii. 2. xxxv. 5. 6. liii. Ps. xvi. 10, 11.

† Matt. xxiv. 1—35. Luke xxi. ‡ Luke xxi. 24.

§ 2 Thes. ii. 3, 4.

*speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their consciences seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them who believe and know the truth.**

A large proportion of the Apocalypse of John respects this grand apostasy, and the corrupt community in which it was accomplished. He describes it with great variety of expression. On some accounts it is represented under the form of a *city*, on others of a *beast*, and on others of a *woman sitting upon a beast*. That we might be at no loss to distinguish it on its appearance, it is intimated that it should not be so much a civil as an apostate ecclesiastical power: It is a *harlot*, opposed to the bride the Lamb's wife:—that it should greatly abound in wealth, and worldly grandeur: *The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls:*—that its dominion should not be confined to its own immediate territories: *Power was given it over all kingdoms, and tongues and nations:*—that its authority should not be derived from its own conquests, but from the voluntary consent of a number of independent kingdoms to come under its yoke: *The kings of the earth have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast:*—that it should be distinguished by its blasphemies, idolatries, and persecuting spirit: *Upon her were the names of blasphemy. They should make an image of the beast, and as many as would not worship the image of the beast were to be killed. And the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints:*—that its persecutions should extend to such a length as for no man to be allowed the common rights of men, unless he become subject to it: *No man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name:*—that its power should continue for *a time, times, and half a time, forty and two months, or one thousand two hundred and sixty days;* during which long period God's witnesses should prophesy in sackcloth, be driven as into a wilderness, and, as it were, slain, and

* 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3.

their bodies lie unburied :—Finally, that they who gave it an exiſtence ſhould be the inſtruments of taking it away: *The kings*, or powers, *of the earth ſhall hate the whore, and burn her fleſh with fire.** Whether all, or any part of this be falſehood, let hiſtory and obſervation determine.

It has often been obſerved that the prophecies of the Meſſiah were ſo numerous and explicit, that at the time of his appearance there was a general expectation of it, not only in Judea, but in all the neighbouring nations: and is not the ſame thing obſervable at this time of the fall of Antichriſt, the converſion of the Jews, and the general ſpread of the goſpel?

Once more—The ſacred writers have predicted the oppoſition which Chriſtianity ſhould meet with, and deſcribed the characters from whom it ſhould proceed. *In the laſt days*, ſay they, *perilous times will come, for men ſhall be lovers of their own ſelves, covetous, boaſters, proud, blaſphemers, diſobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, falſe accuſers, incontinent, fierce, deſpiſers of thoſe that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleaſures more than lovers of God.* Again—*There ſhall be mockers in the laſt time, who ſhall walk after their own ungodly luſts; filthy dreamers, who defile the fleſh, deſpiſe dominion, and ſpeak evil of dignities; raging waves of the ſea, foaming out their own ſhame; wandering ſtars, to whom is reſerved the blackneſs of darkneſs forever.*† Let Mr. Paine, and other infidels, conſider well the above picture, and aſk their own conſciences—Is this a falſehood?

Biſhop Newton, in his *Diſſertations*, has clearly evinced the fulfilment of ſeveral of theſe and other ſcripture prophecies; and has ſhewn that ſome of them are fulfilling at this day. To thoſe *Diſſertations* I refer the reader. Enough has been ſaid to enable us to determine which production it is that deſerves to be called "a book of falſehood," the prophecies of Scripture, or the *Age of Reaſon*.

* Rev. xi. xiii and xvii Chapters.

† 2 Tim. iii. 1—4. Jude.

CHAP. II.

The harmony of Scripture with truth, evinced from its agreement with the dictates of an enlightened conſcience, and the reſult of the cloſeſt obſervation.

IF a brazen mirror were found on ſome remote uninhabited iſland, it might be a doubtful matter how it came thither; but if it properly reflected objects, there could be no doubt of its being a real mirror.

The Bible was written with the profeſſed deſign of being *profitable for reproof;* nor was there ever a book ſo adapted to the purpoſe, or ſo effectual in its operation in diſcloſing the inward workings of the human mind. Thouſands can bear witneſs from experience that it is *quick and powerful, ſharper than any two-edged ſword, piercing even to the dividing aſunder of ſoul and ſpirit, and a diſcerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* Its entrance into the mind giveth light; and light which diſcovers the works of darkneſs. Far from flattering the vices of mankind, it charges, without ceremony, every ſon of Adam with poſſeſſing the heart of an apoſtate. This charge it brings home to the conſcience, not only by its pure precepts, and awful threatenings, but oftentimes by the very invitations and promiſes of mercy; which, while they cheer the heart with lively hope, carry *conviction* by their *import* to the very ſoul. In reading other books you may admire the ingenuity of the writer; but here your attention is turned inward. Read it but ſeriouſly, and your heart will anſwer to its deſcriptions. It will touch the ſecret ſprings of ſenſibility; and if you have any ingenuouſneſs of mind towards God, the tears of grief, mingled with thoſe of hope and gratitude, will, ere you are aware, trickle from your eyes.

Whatever particular vices you may have been addicted to, here you will diſcover your likeneſs; and

that not as by a comic repreſentation on the theatre, which, where it reclaims one perſon by ſhaming him out of his follies, corrupts a thouſand; but in a way that will bring conviction to your boſom.

Come ſee a man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Chriſt? Such was the reaſoning of the woman of Samaria; and who could have reaſoned better? That which makes manifeſt muſt be light. But this reaſoning is applicable to other things as well as the Meſſiahſhip of Jeſus. No man can forbear ſaying of that book, that doctrine, or that preaching which tells him all things that ever he did, Is not this the truth? The ſatisfaction afforded by ſuch evidence approaches near to intuitive certainty: It is having the witneſs in ourſelves.

Should it be objected that though this may ſatisfy our own minds, yet it can afford no evidence to others —I anſwer, It is true that they who ſhun the light cannot be ſuppoſed to poſſeſs that evidence of being what it is, as thoſe who have come to it that their deeds may be made manifeſt: yet even they, if at all acquainted with the Bible, muſt be aware that the likeneſſes which it draws are in a conſiderable degree their own. It is not to ſerious Chriſtians only that the goſpel is a mirror. Many who never look into that perfect law of liberty from choice and delight, ſo as to be bleſſed in their work, but only glance at it in a tranſient and occaſional way, yet perceive ſo much of their own character in it, as to be convinced that it is right, and that they are wrong. The ſecret conviction of thouſands who hear the word, and do it not, reſembles that of Pharaoh, *The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.* The impreſſions of ſuch people, it is true, are frequently ſhort in their duration: like a man who ſeeth his natural face in a glaſs, they go away, and ſtraightway forget what manner of perſons they are: but the averſion which they diſcover to a ſerious reſumption of the ſubject, places it beyond all reaſonable doubt, that, let their hearts be as they may, the Scriptures have commended themſelves to their

conſciences. They have felt the point of this two-edged ſword, and are not diſpoſed to renew the encounter. That this is the caſe, not only with nominal Chriſtians, but with great numbers of profeſſed deiſts, is manifeſt from the acknowledgments of ſuch men as *the Earl of Rocheſter*, and many others who have relented on the near approach of death. This is often a time in which conſcience muſt and will be heard; and, too often for the liking of ſurviving acquaintances, it proclaims to the world, that the grand ſource of their hatred to the Bible has been that for which Ahab hated Micaiah, its propheſying no good concerning them.

The Scriptures are a mirror in which we ſee not only individual characters, our own and others, but the ſtate of things as they move on in the great world. They ſhew us the ſpring-head whence all the malignant ſtreams of idolatry, atheiſm, corruption, perſecution, war, and every other evil originate; and by ſhewing us the origin of theſe deſtructive maladies, clearly inſtruct us wherein muſt conſiſt their cure.

It has already been obſerved* that Chriſtian morality is ſummed up in the love of God and our neighbour, and theſe principles, carried to their full extent, would render the world a paradiſe. But the Scriptures teach us that man is a rebel againſt his Maker; that his carnal mind is enmity againſt God, and is not ſubject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; that inſtead of loving God, or even man in the order which is required, men are become *lovers of their own ſelves*, and neither God nor man are regarded but as they are found neceſſary to ſubſerve their wiſhes.

This ſingle principle of human apoſtaſy, ſuppoſing it to be true, will fully account for all the moral diſorders in the world; and the actual exiſtence of thoſe diſorders, unleſs they can be better accounted for, muſt go to prove the truth of this principle, and, by conſequence, of the Chriſtian ſyſtem which reſts upon it.

* Part I. Chap. III.

We are affected in conſidering the *idolatry* of ſo great a part of the human race; but we are not ſurpriſed at it. If men be deſtitute of the love of God, it is natural to ſuppoſe they will endeavour to baniſh him from their thoughts, and, provided the ſtate of ſociety will admit of it, from their worſhip; ſubſtituting gods more congenial with their inclinations, and in the worſhip of which they can indulge themſelves without fear or control.

Neither are we ſurpriſed at the *practical atheiſm* which abounds among unbelievers, and even among nominal Chriſtians, in European nations. If the ſtate of things be ſuch that groſs idolatry is inadmiſſible, ſtill, if averſion to God predominate, it will ſhew itſelf in a neglect of all worſhip, and of all ſerious converſation, or devout exerciſes; in a wiſh to think there is no God, and no hereafter; and in endeavours to baniſh every thing of a religious nature from ſociety. Or, if this cannot be, and any thing relating to ſuch ſubjects become matter of diſcuſſion, they will be ſo explained away as that nothing ſhall be left which can approve itſelf to an upright heart. The holineſs of the divine character will be kept out of ſight, his precepts diſregarded, and morality itſelf made to conſiſt in ſomething deſtitute of all true virtue.

We are not ſurpriſed at the *corruptions* which Chriſtianity has undergone. Chriſtianity itſelf, as we have already ſeen, foretold it, and the doctrine of human depravity fully accounts for it. When the Chriſtian religion was adopted by the ſtate, it is natural to ſuppoſe there would be great numbers of unprincipled men who would profeſs it; and where its leading characters in any age are of this deſcription, it will certainly be corrupted. The pure doctrine of Chriſt is given up in favour of ſome fleſh-pleaſing ſyſtem, the holy precepts of Chriſtian morality are lowered to the ſtandard of ordinary practice, and the worſhip and ordinances of Chriſt mingled with ſuperſtition, and modelled to a worldly temper. It was thus that Judaiſm was corrupted by the old Phariſees, and Chriſtianity by the papal hierarchy.

The ſucceſs which *evil men and ſeducers* meet with, in propagating falſe doctrine, is no more than may be expected from the preſent ſtate of things. So long as a large proportion of the profeſſors of Chriſtianity receive not the love of the truth, error will be certain to meet with a welcome reception. The groſſeſt impoſtor has only to advance a ſyſtem ſuited to corrupt nature, to aſſert it with effrontery, and to flatter his adherents with being the favourites of Heaven, and he will be followed.*

The *perſecutions* which have been carried on againſt religion are grievous to humanity, and equally repugnant to juſtice and to good policy: but they are not in the leaſt ſurpriſing. There was not a truth more prominent in our Saviour's addreſſes to his followers than this, that having *received his word, the world would hate them! becauſe they were not of the world, as he was not of the world.* When he ſent them forth to preach the goſpel, it was *as ſheep among wolves;* and they were treated accordingly. When he took leave of them previous to his death, he left them his *peace*, as knowing that in the world they ſhould have tribulation. All this was no more than might be expected: for if it be the character of true religion that it ſets itſelf againſt every vicious propenſity of the human heart, it is natural to ſuppoſe that every one who is under the dominion of ſuch propenſity will feel averſe to true religion, and to thoſe who adhere to it. The manner

* Men are much more eaſily deceived in theſe matters, than in the ordinary concerns of life. If a London merchant were to open a warehouſe in different parts of the city, and make it his buſineſs to traduce the characters and commodities of all other merchants; if his oppoſition were directed eſpecially againſt men of probity and eminence, whoſe ſituations were contiguous to his own; in fine, if the only traders in the kingdom who could obtain his good word were certain agents whom he had ſtationed in different parts of the country for the purpoſe of retailing his wares, would not his deſigns be evident? He might puff, and pretend to have the good of the public much at heart; but the public would deſpiſe him as a man whoſe object was a fortune, and whoſe practices evinced that he would heſitate at no means to accompliſh his end. Yet ſuch deceptions may be practiſed in religion with ſucceſs.

in which mankind have ſtood affected towards godly men has been nearly uniform from the beginning. Cain ſlew his brother: and wherefore ſlew he him? becauſe his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Sarah ſaw the ſon of Hagar the Egyptian, mocking: as then he that was born after the fleſh perſecuted him that was born after the ſpirit, even ſo it is now. Why was Jeruſalem a burdenſome ſtone to the nations? Why were they continually forming leagues to root out its remembrance from the earth? The ſame ſpirit that was diſcovered by Edom, Moab, and the childrem of Ammon towards Iſrael, was apparent in Sanballat, Tobiah, Geſhem, and their companions, towards Judah; and the part acted by the Honorite, the Ammonite, and the Arabian, was afterwards re-acted with additional zeal by Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the governors and people of Iſrael. Thoſe who could agree in nothing elſe could agree in this. The perſecutions of Pagan and Papal Rome, and of all who have ſymbolized with her, have been only a continuation of the ſame ſyſtem; and the deſcriptions which deiſtical hiſtorians give of theſe works of darkneſs, notwithſtanding their pretended regard to religious liberty, bear witneſs that they allow the deeds of their fathers, and inherit their diſpoſitions. The ſame malignant ſpirit which was diſcovered by the heathens towards the ancient Iſraelites, is diſcoverable in all the writings of unbelievers towards that people to this day. It is true they are more reconciled to the modern Jews; and for a very plain reaſon: they feel them to be near akin to themſelves. Herod and Pilate were made friends by the crucifixion of Chriſt. Since that time the old enmity has been transferred to believing Gentiles, who being grafted into the Jewiſh olive, and partaking of its advantages, partake alſo of its perſecutions: and by how much the Chriſtian church at any period has exceeded the Jewiſh in purity and ſpirituality, by ſo much more fierce has the wrath of a wicked world burned againſt it.

After all the pains which unbelievers take to shift the charge of persecution, and to lay it at the door of Christianity, it is manifest to an observant eye that there is a deep-rooted enmity in all wicked men, whether they be pagans, papists, protestants, or deists, towards all godly men, of every nation, name, and denomination. This enmity, it is true, is not suffered to operate according to its native tendency. He who holdeth the winds in his hand, restrains it. Men are withheld by laws, by policy, by interests, by education, by respect, by regard founded on other than religious qualities, and by various other things. There are certain conjunctions of interests, especially, which occasionally require a temporary cessation of hostilities; and it may seem, on such occasions, as if wicked men were ashamed of their animosities, and were, all on a sudden, become friendly to the followers of Christ. Thus, at the revolution in 1688, those who, for more than twenty years, had treated the non-conformists with unrelenting severity, when they found themselves in danger of being deprived of their places by a popish prince, courted their friendship, and promised not to persecute them any more. And thus, at the commencement of the French revolution, deists, catholics, and protestants, who were engaged in one political cause, seemed to have forgotten their resentments, all amicably uniting together in the opening of a place for protestant worship. But let not the servants of Christ imagine that any temporary conjunction of interests will extinguish the ancient enmity. It may seem to be so for a time; and all things being under the control of Providence, such a time may be designed as a season of respite for the faithful: but when self-interest hath gained its end, if other worldly considerations do not interpose, things will return to their former channel. The enmity is not dead, but sleepeth.

Finally—The *wars* which from the earliest period of history have desolated the earth, grievous as they are to a feeling mind, contain in them nothing surprising. The Scriptures, with singular propriety, describe the

world as *a great ſea*, which is ever caſting up its mire and dirt; and great conquerors as ſo many *wild beaſts*, which, in ſucceſſion, riſe from its troubled waters, and devour the inhabitants of the earth.* Nor is this all: they deſcribe not only the fact, but the cauſe of it. Wars among men, as hath been already ſtated,† have their *immediate* cauſes in *the luſts which war in their members:* but beſides this, the Scripture leads us to a cauſe more remote, and of ſtill greater importance. They denominate the ſword of war, *the ſword of the Lord*, and conſtantly intimate that it is one of thoſe means by which he *pleadeth with all fleſh*. A part of the curſe entailed on men, for their departure from the living God, conſiſts in this, that, till they return to him, they ſhall not be able, for any length of time, to maintain amity among themſelves. It appears to be one of thoſe laws by which God governs the world, that PEOPLE ENGAGED IN AN EVIL CAUSE, HOWEVER HARMONIOUS THEY MAY BE IN THE OUTSET, SHALL PRESENTLY BE AT VARIANCE. Thus it was between Abimelech and the men of Shechem, as Jotham had forwarned them in his parable. Though at firſt they appeared to rejoice in each other, yet in a little time *fire came out from Abimelech and devoured the men of Shechem, and fire came out from the men of Shechem, and devoured Abimelech.*‡ Such is commonly the iſſue of all unprincipled confederacies, traitorous conſpiracies, illegal combinations, and illicit amours. Union, in order to be laſting, requires to be cemented with honour. Where this is wanting, however appearances may, for a while, be flattering, all will prove tranſitory: mutual jealouſies will produce mutual enmities, which are certain to iſſue in confuſion and every evil work. Theſe remarks are no leſs applicable to the whole human race, than to particular parts of it. Men have revolted from God; and yet think to live in harmony amongſt themſelves. God, in juſt judgment, appears to have determined the contrary; and that till they return to him, they ſhall

* Dan. vii. † Part I. Chap. VII. ‡ Judges ix.

be given up to an evil ſpirit towards each other, and to the ravages of a ſucceſſion of ambitious leaders, who ſhall deſtroy them, in great numbers, from the face of the earth. It is morally impoſſible, indeed, that it ſhould be otherwiſe: for the ſame principle which induces them to renounce the divine government, diſſolves the bands of human ſociety. Supreme ſelf-love is the origin of both, and is ſufficient to account for all the diſorder in the univerſe.

Candid reader, review the ſubject of this chapter. In the laſt we traced the agreement of the Holy Scriptures with hiſtoric fact; in this we have ſeen their correſpondence with *living truth*, or with *things as they actually exiſt in the mind, and in the world.* Similar arguments might alſo have been drawn from the characters of believers and unbelievers. Not many wiſe, not many mighty, not many noble were called in the early ages of Chriſtianity; and it has been the ſame in every age. To the Jews the goſpel was, from the firſt, a ſtumbling-block, and to philoſophers fooliſhneſs; and ſuch it continues to this day. The exiſtence of the Jews, as a diſtinct people; their diſperſion; their attachment to the Old Teſtament, and rejection of the New; their expectation of a Meſſiah; their acknowledgment of the truth of the hiſtorical facts concerning our Lord; the malignity of their ſpirit; in a word, their exact reſemblance, even at this remote period, to the picture drawn of them in the New Teſtament, are facts which cannot be controverted. Judge impartially: Is there any thing in all this that bears the marks of impoſture? A connoiſſeur will diſtinguiſh between paintings taken from life, and ſuch as are the mere work of imagination. An accurate judge of moral painting will do the ſame. If the Scriptures give falſe deſcriptions of men and things; if they flattered the vices of mankind, or exhibited the moral ſtate of the world contrary to well-known fact, you will conclude them to be a work of falſehood. On the other hand, if they ſpeak of things as they are; if conſcience echo to their charges, and fact comport with their repreſen-

tations, they must have been taken from life; and you must conclude them to be, what they profess to be, *a work of truth.* And since the objects described are many of them beyond the ken of human observation, you must conclude that they are not only a work of truth, but, what they also profess to be, *the true sayings of God.*

CHAP. III.

The harmony of Scripture with its own professions, argued from the spirit and style in which it is written.

IF the Scriptures be what they profess to be, the word of God, it may be presumed that the spirit which they breathe, and even the style in which they are composed, will be different from what are found in any other productions. It is true, that, having been communicated through human mediums, we may expect them in a measure to be humanized; the peculiar turn and talents of each writer will be visible, and this will give them the character of variety; but amidst all this variety, a mind capable of discerning the divine excellence will plainly perceive in them the finger of God.

With respect to *style*, though it is not on the natural, but the moral, or rather the *holy* beauties of Scripture that I would lay the principal stress; yet something may be observed of the other. So far as the beauty of language consists in its freedom from affectation, and in its conformity to the nature of the subject, it may be expected that a book written by holy men, inspired by God, will be possessed of this excellence. A divinely inspired production will not only be free from such blemishes as arise from vanity, and other evil dispositions of the mind, but will abound in those beauties which never fail to attend the genuine exercises of modesty, sensibility, and godly simplicity. It will re-

ject the meretricious ornaments of art: but it will poſſeſs the more ſubſtantial beauties of nature. That this is true of the Scriptures has been proved by ſeveral able writers.*

Mr. Paine, however, can ſee nothing great, majeſtic, or worthy of God, in any part of the Bible. Among the numerous terms of reproach with which he honours it, he is pleaſed to cenſure the writings of Iſaiah as "bombaſt, beneath the genius of a ſchool-boy;" and to compare the command of the great Creator, in the firſt chapter of Geneſis, *Let there be light*, to the "imperative manner of ſpeaking uſed by a conjuror."† This writer has given us no example of the bombaſt from Iſaiah. Bombaſt is that ſpecies of writing in which great ſwelling words are uſed to convey little ideas. But is it thus in the writings of Iſaiah?—*And one cried to another, ſaying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hoſts: the whole earth is full of his glory. Who hath meaſured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a ſpan, and comprehended the duſt of the earth in a meaſure, and weighed the mountains in ſcales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counſellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counſel, and who inſtructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and ſhewed to him the way of underſtanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the ſmall duſt of the balance: behold, he taketh up the iſles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not ſufficient to burn, nor the beaſts thereof ſufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him leſs than nothing and vanity.* Are the ideas too little in theſe inſtances for the words? The prophets wrote in a poetic ſtyle; and how could they write otherwiſe? Poetry is the language of paſſion; and ſuch as their's, of paſſion raiſed and inflamed by great and affecting objects.

* See Blackwall's Sacred Claſſics: Melmoth's Sublime and Beautiful of Scripture: to which is added Dwight's Diſſertation on the Poetry, Hiſtory, and Eloquence of the Bible.

† Age of Reaſon, Part II. p. 105. *Note.*

Their language is not that of common poetry, but, as an elegant writer expreſſes it, "It is the burſt of in-"ſpiration."

As to the objection againſt the ſublimity of the paſſage in the firſt chapter of Geneſis, it is ſufficient to obſerve, that there is nothing, be it ever ſo majeſtic, and worthy of God, but a profane and ludicrous imagination may diſtort it. A rainbow may be compared to a fiddle-ſtick: but it does not follow that it is an object of equal inſignificance. Thunder and lightning may be imitated by a character not leſs contemptible than a conjuror: but ſhould any one infer that there is nothing more grand, more awful, or more worthy of God, in theſe diſplays of nature, than in the exhibitions of a country ſhow, he would prove himſelf to be poſſeſſed of but a ſmall portion of either wit or good ſenſe.

I do not pretend to any great judgment in the beauties of compoſition: but there are perſons of far ſuperior judgment to this writer, who have expreſſed themſelves in a very different language. The late Sir William Jones, who, for learning and taſte, as well as character, has left but few equals, thus expreſſes himſelf: "I have regularly and attentively read theſe Holy "Scriptures, and am of opinion that this Volume, in-"dependent of its divine origin, contains more ſublimi-"ty and beauty, more pure morality, more important "hiſtory, and finer ſtrains of poetry and eloquence, than "can be collected from all other books, in whatever "age or language they may have been compoſed."

The acknowledgments of Rouſſeau, likewiſe, whoſe taſte for fine writing, and whoſe freedom from prejudice in favour of Chriſtianity, none will call in queſtion, will ſerve to confront the aſſertions of Mr. Paine. After declaring that as there were ſome proofs in favour of Revelation which he could not invalidate, ſo there were many objections againſt it which he could not reſolve; that he neither admitted, nor rejected it; and that he rejected only the *obligation* of ſubmitting to it; he goes on to acknowledge as follows: "I will confeſs "to you farther, that the majeſty of the Scripture ſtrikes

"me with admiration, as the purity of the gospel has "its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our "philosophers, with all their pomp of diction; how "mean, how contemptible, are they, compared with "the Scripture! Is it possible that a book, at once so "simple and sublime, should be merely the work of "man? Is it possible that the sacred personage, whose "history it contains, should be himself a mere man? "Do we find that he assumed the air of an enthusiast "or ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity "in his manners! What an affecting gracefulness in "his delivery! What sublimity in his maxims! What "profound wisdom in his discourses! What presence "of mind! What subtilty! What truth in his replies! "How great the command over his passions! Where "is the man, where the philosopher, who could "so live and die, without weakness, and without osten- "tation? Shall we suppose the Evangelic History a "mere fiction? Indeed, my friend, it bears not the "marks of fiction. On the contrary, the history of "Socrates, which nobody presumes to doubt, is not so "well attested as that of Jesus Christ. The Jewish "authors were incapable of the diction and strangers "to the morality contained in the gospels; the marks "of whose truth are so striking and invincible, that "the inventor would be a more astonishing character "than the hero."*

Rousseau's praises of the Scriptures remind us of the high encomiums bestowed by Balaam on the Tabernacles of Israel. It is no unusual thing for men to admire that which they do not love.

Let us examine a little more minutely the *spirit* in which the Scriptures are written. It is this which constitutes their *holy* beauty, that distinguishes them from all other writings, and that affords the strongest evidence of their being written by inspiration of God.

In recording historical events the sacred writers *invariably eye the hand of God:* in some instances they

* Works, Vol. V. p. 215—218.

entirely overlook second causes; and in others, where they are mentioned, it is only as instruments, fulfilling the divine will. Events that came to pass according to the usual course of things, and in which an ordinary historian would have seen nothing divine, are recorded by them amongst the works of the Lord. *The Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight. And the Lord sent against Jehoiakim bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord which he spake by his servants the prophets. Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did, and also for the innocent blood that he shed; for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood which the Lord would not pardon.**

In their *prophecies*, while they foretold the heaviest calamities upon nations, their own and others, and viewing the hand of God in all, acquiesced in them, as men they felt tenderly for their fellow-creatures, even for their enemies. *My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me: I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? Put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still.*† When Israel was exposed to calamities, all the neighbouring nations, who hated them on account of their religion, exulted over them: but when the cup went round to them, the prophets who foretold it were tenderly affected by it. *I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh: for the shouting for thy summer-fruits, and for thy harvest, is fallen. And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting: the treaders shall tread out no wine in their presses; I have*

* 2 Kings, xvii. 18. xxiv. 2, 3, 4. † Jer. iv. 19. xlvii. 6.

*made ſhouting to ceaſe, wherefore my bowels ſhall ſound like an harp for Moab, and mine inward parts for Kir-hareſh.**

The *miracles* which they record are diſtinguiſhed from the ſigns and lying wonders of following ages, in that there is always to be ſeen in them an end worthy of God. The far greater part of them were works of pure compaſſion to the parties; and the whole of them of benevolence to ſociety.

There is nothing in the Scriptures adapted to gratify *preſumptuous ſpeculation* or *idle curioſity*. Such a ſpirit, on the contrary, is frequently checked, and every thing is directed to the renovation or improvement of the heart. The account given of the creation of the ſun, moon, and ſtars, is not intended, as Mr. Henry obſerves, to deſcribe things "as they are in themſelves, and in their own nature, to ſatisfy the curious; but as they are in relation to this earth, to which they ſerve as *lights*; and this is enough to furniſh us with matter for praiſe and thankſgiving." The miracles of Jeſus were never performed to gratify curioſity. If the afflicted, or any on their behalf, preſent their petition, it is invariably heard and anſwered: but if the phariſees come and ſay, *Maſter, we would ſee a ſign from thee*; or if Herod *hope to ſee a miracle done by him*, it is refuſed.† When one ſaid to him, *Lord, are there few that be ſaved?* he anſwered, *Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate: for many, I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.*‡

There is nothing in the Scriptures tending, in its own nature, to excite *levity* or *folly*. They ſometimes deal in the moſt cutting irony; but it is never for the ſake of diſplaying wit, or raiſing a laugh, but invariably for the accompliſhment of a ſerious and important end. A ſerious mind finds every thing to gratify it, and nothing to offend it: and even the moſt profligate character, unleſs he read them in ſearch of ſomething which he may convert into ridicule, is impreſſed with

* Iſai. xvi. 9, 10, 11. † Matt. xii. 38. Luke, xxiii. 8, 9.

‡ Luke, xiii. 24. See alſo xxi. 5—19.

awe by the pointed and solemn manner in which they address him.

It may be said of the Scriptures, and of them only, that they are *free from affectation and vanity*. You may sometimes find things of this sort described by the sacred writers; but you will never discern any such spirit in the descriptions themselves. Yet were they, as men, subject to human imperfections; if, therefore, they had not been influenced by divine inspiration, blemishes of this kind must have appeared in their writings, as well as in those of other men. But in what instance have they assumed a character which does not belong to them; or discovered a wish to be thought more religious, more learned, or more accomplished in any way than they were? Nor were they less free from vanity than from affectation. They were as far from making the most of what they were, as from aiming to appear what they were not. Instead of trumpeting their own praise, or aiming to transmit their fame to posterity, several of them have not so much as put their names to their writings; and those who have, are generally out of sight. As you read their history, they seldom occur to your thoughts. Who thinks of the Evangelists when reading the *four gospels;* or of Luke while reading the *Acts of the Apostles?* Mr. Paine weaves the laurel on his own brows, vainly boasting that he has "written a book under the "greatest disadvantages, which no Bible believer can "answer;" and that with his axe upon his shoulder, like another Sennacherib, he has passed through, and cut down the tall cedars of our Lebanon.* But thus did not the sacred writers, even with regard to heathenism, because of the fear of God. Paul, in one instance, for the sake of answering an important end, was compelled to speak the truth of himself, and to appear to boast; yet it is easy to perceive how much it was against his inclination. A *boaster* and a *fool* were, in his account, synonimous terms.†

* Age of Reason, Part II. Pref. p. vi. and p. 64. † 2 Cor. xii.

The sacred writers, while they respect magistracy, and frown upon faction, tumult, and sedition, are *never known to flatter the great.* Compare the fustian eloquence of Tertullus with the manly speeches of Paul. Did he flatter Felix? No; he *reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, and Felix trembled.* Did he flatter Festus or even Agrippa? No; the highest compliment which proceeded from him was, that *he knew* the latter *to be expert in all customs and questions among the Jews*, and to maintain the divine inspiration of the prophets; which declaration, with the whole of this admirable apology, contained only the words of truth and soberness.

They discover no *anxiety to guard against seeming inconsistencies*, either with themselves or one another. In works of imposture, especially where a number of persons are concerned, there is need of great care and caution, lest one part should contradict another; and such caution is easily perceived. But the sacred writers appear to have had no such concern about them. Conscious that all they wrote was true, they left it to prove its own consistency. Their productions possess consistency; but it is not a studied one, nor always apparent at first sight: it is that consistency which is certain to accompany truth.*

* "There is one argument," says Mr. Wilberforce, in his late excellent Treatise, "which impresses my mind with particular force. "This is, the great variety of the *kinds* of evidence which have "been adduced in proof of Christianity, and the confirmation "thereby afforded of its truth:—the proof from prophecy; from "miracles; from the character of Christ; from that of his apostles; "from the nature of the doctrines of Christianity; from the nature "and excellency of her practical precepts; from the accordance "we have lately pointed out between the doctrinal and practical "system of Christianity, whether considered each in itself, or in "their mutual relation to each other; from other species of inter"nal evidence, afforded in the more abundance as the sacred rec"ords have been scrutinized with greater care; from the accounts "of cotemporary, or nearly cotemporary writers; from the impos"sibility of accounting on any other supposition than that of the "truth of Christianity for its promulgation and early prevalence: "these and other lines of argument have all been brought forward, "and urged by different writers, in proportion as they have struck

There is an *inimitable simplicity in all their writings, and a feeling sense of what they write.* They come to the point without ceremony, or preamble; and having told the truth, leave it without mingling their own reflections. This remark is particularly exemplified by the four Evangelists in narrating the treatment of their Lord. Writers who had felt less, would have said more.

There is something in all they say which leaves behind it a sensation produced by no other writings; something peculiarly suited to the mind when in its most serious frames, oppressed by affliction, or thoughtful about a future life; something which gives melancholy itself a charm, and produces tears more delicious to the mind than the most high-flavoured earthly enjoyments. By what name shall I express it? It is *a savour of life, a savour of God, an unction from the Holy One.*

Mr. Paine can see no beauty in the New Testament narratives; to him there appears nothing but *imposture, folly, contradiction, falsehood,* and every thing that marks an evil cause. And I suppose he could say the same of the things narrated; of the labours, tears, temptations, and sufferings of the Lord Jesus, and of every thing else in the New Testament. Mr. Paine, however, is not the only instance wherein men have lacked understanding. The Jews saw no beauty in the Saviour that they should desire him: and there are persons who can see no beauty in any of the works of God. Crea-

"the minds of different observers more or less forcibly. Now granting that some obscure and illiterate men, residing in a distant province of the Roman empire, had plotted to impose a forgery upon the world; though some foundation for the imposture might, and indeed must, have been attempted to be laid; it seems, at least to my understanding, morally impossible that so many species of proof, and all so strong, should have lent their concurrent aid, and have united their joint force in the establishment of the falsehood. It may assist the reader in estimating the value of this argument, to consider upon how different a footing, in this respect, has rested every other religious system, without exception, which was ever proposed to the world; and indeed every other historical fact, of which the truth has been at all contested."

Practical View, &c. p. 301—368, 3d. ed.

tion is to them a blank. But though *the eyes of a fool are at the ends of the earth*, for want of objects to attract them, yet *wisdom is before him that understandeth.** If Mr. Paine can see no beauty in the sacred pages, it does not follow that there is no beauty to be seen. Let any person of candour and discernment read over the four Evangelists, and judge whether they bear the marks of imposture. If he have any difficulty, it will be in preserving the character of a critic. Unless he be perpetually on his guard, he will insensibly lose sight of the writers, and be all enamoured of the great object concerning which they write. In reading the nine last chapters of John, he will perceive the writer to be deeply affected. Though a long time had elapsed since the events had taken place, and he was far advanced in years; yet his heart was manifestly overwhelmed with his subject. There is reason to think that the things which Mr. Paine attempts to ridicule, drew tears from his eyes while he narrated them; as an ingenious mind will find it difficult to review the narrative without similar sensations.

Mr. Paine is pleased to say, "Any person that could "read and write, might have written such a book as "the Bible:" but nothing can be farther from the truth. It were saying but little, to affirm that *he* could not produce a single page or sentence that would have a similar effect. Stranger, as he has proved himself to be, to the love of God and righteousness, he could not communicate what he does not feel. The croaking raven might as well endeavour to imitate the voice of the dove, or the song of the nightingale, as he attempt to emulate the Holy Scriptures. Mr. Paine's spirit is sufficiently apparent in his page, and that of the sacred writers in theirs. So far from writing as they wrote, he cannot understand their writings. That which the Scriptures teach on this subject is sufficiently verified in him, and all others of his spirit: *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he*

* Prov. xvii. 24.

know them, for they are spiritually discerned. As easily might the loveliness of chastity be perceived, or the pleasures of a good conscience appreciated by a debauchee, as the things of God be received by a mind like that of Mr. Paine.

Finally—If the Bible be the word of God, it may be expected that *such an authority, and divine sanction should accompany it*, that while a candid mind shall presently perceive its evidence, those who read it either with negligence or prejudice, shall only be confirmed in their unbelief. It is fit that God's word should not be trifled with. When the Pharisees captiously demanded a sign, or miracle, they were sent away without one. They might go, if they pleased, and report the inability of Jesus to work a miracle. The evidence attending the resurrection of Christ is of this description. He had exhibited proofs enough of his divine mission publickly, and before the eyes of all men; but seeing they were obstinately rejected, he told his enemies that they should see him no more till he should come on a different occasion:* and they saw him no more. They might insist, if they pleased, that the testimony of his disciples, who witnessed his resurrection, was insufficient. It is thus that heresies, offences, and scandals are permitted in the Christian church, that they who are approved may be made manifest; and that occasion may be furnished for them who seek occasion to reproach religion, and persist in their unbelief. If men choose delusion, God also will choose to give them up to it. *The scorner shall seek wisdom, and shall not find it;* and the word of life shall be *a savour of death unto death to them that perish.* Mr. Paine, when he wrote the First Part of his *Age of Reason*, was without a Bible. Afterwards, he tells us, he procured one; or to use his own school-boy language, "a Bible and "a Testament; and I have found them," he adds, "to be much worse books than I had conceived."† In all this there is nothing surprising. On the con-

* Matt. xxiii. 39. † Age of Reason, Part II. Pref. p. xii.

trary, if such a scorner had found wisdom, the Scriptures themselves had not been fulfilled.*

If an insolent coxcomb had been of opinion that Sir Isaac Newton was a mere ignoramus in philosophy, and had gone into his company that he might catechise, and afterwards, as occasion should offer, expose him; it is not unlikely that this great writer, perceiving his arrogance, would have suffered him to depart without answering his questions, even though he might know at the time that his unfavourable opinion of him would thereby be the more confirmed. Let us but come to the Scriptures in a proper spirit, and we shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God: but if we approach them in a cavilling humour, we may expect not only to remain in ignorance, but to be hardened more and more in unbelief.

CHAP. IV.

The consistency of the Christian doctrine, particularly that of salvation through a Mediator, with sober Reason.

IF there be a God who created us; if we have all sinned against him; and if there be reason to believe that he will call us to account for our conduct, all which principles are admitted by Mr. Paine;† a gloomy prospect must needs present itself, sufficient indeed to render man "the slave of terror." It is not in the power of this writer, nor of any man living, who rejects the Bible, to assure us that pardon will have any place in the divine government; and however light he may make of the Scripture doctrine of hell, he that calls men to account for their deeds will be at no loss how or where to punish them. But allowing that God is disposed to shew mercy to the guilty, the question

* Prov. xiv. 6. † Age of Reason, Part I. p. 1. Part II. p. 100.

is, whether his doing ſo by or without a Mediator be moſt conſiſtent with what we know of fitneſs or propriety?

That pardon is beſtowed through a Mediator, in a vaſt variety of inſtances among men, cannot be denied; and that it is proper it ſhould be ſo, muſt be evident to every thinking mind. All who are acquainted with the common affairs of life muſt be aware of the neceſſity of ſuch proceedings, and the good effects of them upon ſociety.*

It is far leſs *humbling* for an offender to be pardoned at his own requeſt, than through the interpoſition of a third perſon: for in the one caſe he may be led to think that it was his virtue and penitence which influenced the deciſion; whereas in the other he is compelled to feel his own unworthineſs: and this may be one reaſon why the mediation of Chriſt is ſo offenſive. It is no wonder, indeed, that thoſe who deny humility to be a virtue,† ſhould be diſguſted with a doctrine, the profeſſed object of which is to abaſe the pride of man.

As forgiveneſs without a Mediator is leſs humbling to the offender, ſo it provides leſs for the *honour* of the offended, than a contrary proceeding. Many a compaſſionate heart has longed to go forth, like David, towards Abſalom; but from a juſt ſenſe of wounded authority, could not tell how to effect it; and has greatly deſired that ſome common friend would interpoſe, and ſave his honour. He has wiſhed to remit the ſentence; but has felt the want of a mediator, at the inſtance of whom he might give effect to his deſires, and exerciſe mercy without ſeeming to be regardleſs of juſtice. An offender who ſhould object to a mediator, would be juſtly conſidered as hardened in impenitence, and regardleſs of the honour of the offended: and it is difficult to ſay what other conſtruction can be put upon the objections of ſinners to the Mediation of Chriſt.

* See Preſident Edwards's Remarks on important Theological Controverſies, Chap. VI.

† Volney's Law of Nature, p. 49.

Again—To exercise pardon without a mediator, would be fixing no such *stigma upon the evil of the offence*, as is done by a contrary mode of proceeding. Every man feels that those faults which may be overlooked on a mere acknowledgment, are not of a very heinous nature: they are such as arise from inadvertence rather than from ill design; and include little more than an error of the judgment. On the other hand, every man feels that the calling in of a third person is making much of the offence, treating it as a serious affair, a breach that is not to be lightly passed over. This may be another reason why the Mediation of Christ is so offensive to the adversaries of the gospel. It is no wonder that men who are continually speaking of moral evil under the palliating names of *error*, *frailty*, *imperfection*, and the like, should spurn at a doctrine, the implication of which *condemns** it to everlasting infamy.

Finally—To bestow pardon without a Mediator would be treating the offence as *private*, or passing over it as a matter unknown, an affair which does not affect the well-being of society, and which, therefore, requires no public manifestation of displeasure against it. Many a notorious offender would, doubtless, wish matters to be thus conducted, and from an aversion to public exposure, would feel strong objections to the formal interposition of a third person. Whether this may not be another reason of dislike to the Mediation of Christ, I shall not decide; but of this I am fully satisfied, that the want of a proper sense of the great evil of sin, as it affects the moral government of the universe, is a reason why its adversaries see no necessity for it, nor fitness in it. They prove by all their writings that they have no delight in the moral excellency of the divine nature, no just sense of the glory of moral government, and no proper views of the pernicious and wide extended influence of sin upon the moral system. Is it any wonder, therefore, that they should be unconcerned

* Rom. viii. 3.

about the plague being ſtayed by a ſacrifice? Such views are too enlarged for their ſelfiſh and contracted minds. The only object of their care, even in their moſt ſerious moments, is to eſcape puniſhment: for the honour of God, and the real good of creation, they diſcover no concern. The amount is this: If it be, indeed, improper for a guilty creature to lie low before his Creator; if it be unfit that any regard ſhould be paid to the honour of his character; if the offence committed againſt him be of ſo ſmall account, that it is unneceſſary for him to expreſs any diſpleaſure againſt it; and if it have been ſo private, and inſulated in its operations, as in no way to affect the well-being of the moral ſyſtem, the doctrine of forgiveneſs through a Mediator is unreaſonable. But if the contrary be true; if it be proper for a guilty creature to lie in the duſt before his offended Creator; if the honour of the divine character deſerve the firſt and higheſt regard; if moral evil be the greateſt of all evils, and require, even where it is forgiven, a ſtrong expreſſion of divine diſpleaſure againſt it; and if its pernicious influence be ſuch that if ſuffered to operate according to its native tendency, it would dethrone the Almighty, and deſolate the univerſe, the doctrine in queſtion muſt accord with the plaineſt dictates of reaſon.

The ſenſe of mankind, with regard to the neceſſity of a Mediator, may be illuſtrated by the following ſimilitude. Let us ſuppoſe a diviſion in the army of one of the wiſeſt and beſt of kings, through the evil counſel of a foreign enemy, to have been diſaffected to his government; and that without any provocation on his part, they traitorouſly conſpired againſt his crown and life. The attempt failed; and the offenders were ſeized, diſarmed, tried by the laws of their country, and condemned to die. A reſpite however was granted them, during his majeſty's pleaſure. At this ſolemn period, while every part of the army, and of the empire, was expecting the fatal order for execution, the king was employed in meditating mercy. But how could mercy be ſhewn? "To make

"light of a conspiracy," said he to his friends, "would "loosen the bands of good government: other divis- "ions of the army might be tempted to follow their "example; and the nation at large might be in danger "of imputing it to tameness, fear, or some unworthy "motive."

Every one felt in this case the necessity of a media- tor, and agreed as to the general line of conduct proper for him to pursue. "He must not attempt," said they, "to compromise the difference by dividing the blame: "that would make things worse. He must justify "the king, and condemn the outrage committed "against him; he must offer, if possible, some hon- "ourable expedient, by means of which the bestow- "ment of pardon shall not relax, but strengthen just "authority; he must convince the conspirators of "their crime, and introduce them in the character of "supplicants; and mercy must be shewn them out of "respect to him, or for his sake."

But who could be found to mediate in such a cause? This was an important question. A work of this kind, it was allowed on all hands, required singular qualifi- cations—"He must be *perfectly clear of any participation* "*in the offence*," said one, "or inclination to favour it: "for to pardon conspirators at the intercession of one "who is friendly to their cause, would be not only "making light of the crime, but giving a sanction "to it."

"He must," said another, "be one who on account "of his character and services *stands high in the esteem* "*of the king and of the public*: for to mediate in such a "cause is to become, in a sort, responsible for the "issue. A mediator in effect pledges his honour "that no evil will result to the state from the granting "of his request. But if a mean opinion be entertain- "ed of him, no trust can be placed in him, and con- "sequently no good impression would be made by his "mediation on the public mind."

"I conceive it is necessary," said a third, "that the "weight of the mediation should bear a proportion to

" the magnitude of the crime, and to the value of the " favour requeſted; and that for this end it is proper " he ſhould be a perſon of *great dignity*. For his ma- " jeſty to pardon a company of conſpirators at the in- " terceſſion of one of their former comrades, or of any " other obſcure character, even though he might be " a worthy man, would convey a very diminutive idea " of the evil of the offence."

A fourth remarked, that " he muſt poſſeſs a *tender* " *compaſſion* towards the unhappy offenders, or he " would not cordially intereſt himſelf on their behalf."

Finally—It was ſuggeſted by a fifth, that " for the " greater fitneſs of the proceeding, it would be proper " that ſome *relation* or *connexion* ſhould ſubſiſt between " the parties. We feel the propriety," ſaid he, " of " forgiving an offence at the interceſſion of a father, " or a brother; or, if it be committed by a ſoldier, of " his commanding officer. Without ſome kind of pre- " vious relation or connexion, a mediation would have " the appearance of an arbitrary and formal proceſs, " and prove but little intereſting to the hearts of the " community."

Such were the reaſonings of the king's friends; but where to find the character in whom theſe qualifications were united, and what particular expedient could be deviſed by means of which, pardon, inſtead of relaxing, ſhould ſtrengthen, juſt authority, were ſubjects too difficult for them to reſolve.

Meanwhile the king and his ſon, whom he greatly loved, and whom he had appointed generaliſſimo of all his forces, had retired from the company, and were converſing about the matter which attracted the general attention.

" My ſon!" ſaid the benevolent ſovereign, " what " can be done in behalf of theſe unhappy men? To " order them for execution, violates every feeling of " my heart: yet to pardon them is dangerous. The " army, and even the empire would be under a ſtrong " temptation to think lightly of rebellion. If mercy " be exerciſed, it muſt be through a mediator; and

"who is qualified to mediate in such a cause? And "what expedient can be devised by means of which "pardon shall not relax, but strengthen just authority: "Speak, my son, and say what measures can be pur-"sued?"

"My father!" said the prince, "I feel the insult "offered to your person and government, and the injury "thereby aimed at the empire at large. They have "transgressed without cause, and deserve to die with-"out mercy. Yet I also feel for them. I have the "heart of a soldier. I cannot endure to witness their "execution. What shall I say? On me be this wrong! "Let me suffer in their stead. Inflict on me as much "as is necessary to impress the army and the nation "with a just sense of the evil, and of the importance "of good order and faithful allegiance. Let it be in "their presence, and in the presence of all assembled. "When this is done, let them be permitted to implore "and receive your majesty's pardon in my name. If "any man refuse so to implore, and to so receive it, "let him die the death!"

"My son!" replied the king, "you have express-"ed my heart! The same things have occupied my "mind; but it was my desire that you should be vol-"untary in the undertaking. It shall be as you "have said. I shall be satisfied; justice itself will be "satisfied; and I pledge my honour that you also shall "be satisfied, in seeing the happy effects of your "disinterested conduct. Propriety requires that I "stand aloof in the day of your affliction; but I will "not leave you utterly; nor suffer the beloved of my "soul to remain in that condition. A temporary af-"fliction on your part will be more than equivalent to "death on theirs. The dignity of your person and "character will render the sufferings of an hour of "greater account as to the impression of the public "mind, than if all the rebellious had been executed: "and by how much I am known to have loved you, "by so much will my compassion to them, and my

"displeasure against their wicked conduct be made "manifest. Go, my son, assume the likeness of a "criminal, and suffer in their place!"

The gracious design being communicated at court, all were struck with it. Those who had reasoned on the qualifications of a mediator saw that in the prince all were united, and were filled with admiration: but that he should be willing to suffer in the place of rebels was beyond all that could have been asked or thought. Yet seeing he himself had generously proposed it, would survive his sufferings, and reap the reward of them, they cordially acquiesced. The only difficulty that was started, was amongst the judges of the realm. They, at first, questioned whether the proceeding were admissible. "The law," said they, "makes provision "for the transfer of debts, but not of crimes. Its "language is, *The soul that sinneth shall die.*" But when they came to view things on a more enlarged scale, considering it as an expedient on an extraordinary occasion, and perceived that the *spirit* of the law would be preserved, and all the ends of good government answered, they were satisfied. "It is not a measure," said they, "for which the law provides: yet it is not "contrary to the law, but above it."

The day appointed arrived. The prince appeared, and suffered as a criminal. The hearts of the king's friends bled at every stroke, and burned with indignation against the conduct which rendered it necessary. His enemies, however, even some of those for whom he suffered, continuing to be disaffected, added to the affliction, by deriding and insulting him all the time. At a proper period, he was rescued from their outrage. Returning to the palace, amidst the tears and shouts of the loyal spectators, the suffering hero was embraced by his royal father; who, in addition to the natural affection which he bore to him as a son, loved him for his singular interposition at such a crisis. "Sit thou," said he, "at my right hand! Though the threatenings "of the law be not literally accomplished, yet the "spirit of them is preserved. The honour of good

"government is secured, and the end of punishment "more effectually answered than if all the rebels had "been sacrificed. Ask of me what I shall give thee! "No favour can be too great to be bestowed, even "upon the unworthiest, nor any crime too aggravated "to be forgiven, in thy name. I will grant thee ac- "cording to thine own heart! Ask of me, my son, "what I shall give thee!"

He asked for the offenders to be introduced as supplicants at the feet of his father, for the forgiveness of their crimes, and for the direction of affairs till order and happiness should be perfectly restored.

A proclamation, addressed to the conspirators, was now issued, stating what had been their conduct, what the conduct of the king, and what of the prince. Messengers also were appointed to carry it, with orders to read it publickly, and to expostulate with them individually, beseeching them to be reconciled to their offended sovereign, and to assure them that if they rejected this, there remained no more hope of mercy.

A spectator would suppose that in mercy so freely offered, and so honourably communicated, every one would have acquiesced; and if reason had governed the offenders, it had been so: but many amongst them continued under the influence of disaffection, and disaffection gives a false colouring to every thing.

The time of the respite having proved longer than was at first expected, some had begun to amuse themselves with idle speculations, flattering themselves that their fault was a mere trifle, and that it would certainly be passed over. Indeed the greater part of them had turned their attention to other things, concluding that the king was not in good earnest.

When the proclamation was read, many paid no manner of attention to it; some insinuated that the messengers were interested men, and that there might be no truth in what they said; and some even abused them as impostors. So, having delivered their message, they withdrew: and the rebels finding themselves alone, such of them as paid any attention to the subject expressed their minds as follows:

"My heart," ſays one, "riſes againſt every part of "this proceeding. Why all this ado about a few words "ſpoken one to another? Can ſuch a meſſage as this "have proceeded from the king? What have we done "ſo much againſt him, that ſo much ſhould be made "of it? No petition of ours, it ſeems, would avail "any thing; and nothing that we could ſay or do "could be regarded, unleſs preſented in the name of "a third perſon. Surely if we preſent a petition in "our own names, in which we beg pardon, and "promiſe not to repeat the offence, this might ſuffice. "Even this is more than I can find in my heart to "comply with; but every thing beyond it is unrea-"ſonable; and who can believe that the king can de-"ſire it?"

"If a third perſon," ſays another, "muſt be con-"cerned in the affair, what occaſion is there for one ſo "high in rank and dignity? To ſtand in need of *ſuch* a "mediator muſt ſtamp our characters with everlaſting "infamy. It is very unreaſonable: who can believe "it? If the king be juſt and good, as they ſay he is, "how can he wiſh thus publickly to expoſe us?"

"I obſerve," ſays a third, "that *the mediator is wholly* "*on the king's ſide;* and one whom, though he affects "to pity us, we have from the outſet, conſidered as no "leſs our enemy than the king himſelf. If, indeed, he "could compromiſe matters, and would allow that we "had our provocations, and would promiſe us redreſs, "and an eaſier yoke in future, I ſhould feel inclined to "hearken: but if he have no conceſſions to offer, I "can never be reconciled."

"I believe," ſays a fourth, "that the king knows very "well that we have not had juſtice done us, and there-"fore this mediation buſineſs is introduced to make us "amends for the injury. It is an affair ſettled ſome-"how betwixt him and his ſon. They call it *grace;* "and I am not much concerned what they call it, ſo "that my life is ſpared; but this I ſay, if he had not "made this or ſome kind of proviſion, I ſhould have "thought him a tyrant."

"You are all wrong," says a fifth: "I comprehend the design, and am well pleased with it. I hate "the government as much as any of you: but I love "the mediator; for I understand it is his intention to "deliver me from its tyranny. He has paid the debt, "the king is satisfied, and I am free. I will sue out "my right, and demand my liberty!"

In addition to this, one of the company observed, he did not see what the greater part of them had to do with the proclamation, unless it were to give it a hearing, which they had done already. "For," said he, "pardon is promised only to them who are *willing* to "submit, and it is well known that many of us are "unwilling; nor *can* we alter our minds on this "subject."

After a while, however, some of them were brought to relent. They thought upon the subject matter of the proclamation, were convinced of the justness of its statements, reflected upon their evil conduct, and were sincerely sorry on account of it. And now the mediation of the prince appeared in a very different light. They cordially said *Amen* to every part of the proceeding. The very things which gave such offence while their hearts were disaffected, now appeared to them fit, and right, and glorious. "It is fit," say they, "that the king should be "honoured, and that we should be humbled; for we "have *transgressed without cause*. It is right that no "regard should be paid to any petition of ours for its "own sake; for we have done deeds worthy of death. "It is glorious that we should be saved at the intercession of so honourable a personage. The dignity of "his character, together with his surprising condescension and goodness, impresses us more than any thing "else, and fills our hearts with penitence, confidence, "and love. That which in the proclamation is called "grace, *is* grace; for we are utterly unworthy of it; "and if we had all suffered according to our sentence, "the king and his throne had been guiltless. We "embrace the mediation of the prince, not as a repa-

" ration for an injury, but as a ſingular inſtance of " mercy. And far be it from us that we ſhould con- " ſider it as deſigned to deliver us from our original " and juſt allegiance to his majeſty's government! No, " rather it is intended to reſtore us to it. We love our " interceſſor, and will implore forgiveneſs in his name; " but we alſo love our ſovereign, and long to proſtrate " ourſelves at his feet. We rejoice in the ſatisfaction " which the prince has made, and all our hopes of " mercy are founded upon it: but we have no notion " of being freed by it previouſly to our acquieſcence " in it. Nor do we deſire any other kind of freedom " than that which while it remits the juſt ſentence of " the law, reſtores us to his majeſty's government. " O that we were once clear of this hateful and hor- " rid conſpiracy, and might be permitted to ſerve him " with affection and fidelity all the days of our life! " We cannot ſuſpect the *ſincerity* of the invitation, or " acquit our companions on the ſcore of *unwillingneſs*. " Why ſhould we? We do not on this account acquit " ourſelves. On the contrary, it is the remembrance " of our unwillingneſs that now cuts us to the heart. " We well remember to what it was owing that we " *could not* be ſatisfied with the juſt government of the " king, and afterwards *could not* comply with the invita- " tions of mercy: it was becauſe we were under the " dominion of a *diſaffected ſpirit*; a ſpirit which wick- " ed as it is in itſelf, it would be more wicked to juſti- " fy. Our counſel is, therefore, the ſame as that of " his majeſty's meſſengers, with whom we now take " our ſtand. Let us lay aſide this cavilling humour, " repent, and ſue for mercy in the way preſcribed, ere " mercy be hid from our eyes!"

The reader, in applying this ſuppoſed caſe to the Mediation of Chriſt, will do me the juſtice to remember that I do not pretend to have perfectly repreſented it. Probably there is no ſimilitude fully adequate to the purpoſe. The diſtinction between the Father and the Son is not the ſame as that which ſubſiſts between a father and a ſon amongſt men; the latter are two

separate beings; but to assert this of the former would be inconsistent with the divine unity. And with respect to the innocent voluntarily suffering for the guilty, in a few extraordinary instances this principle may be adopted; but the management and application of it, generally require more wisdom and more power than mortals possess. We may by the help of a machine collect a few sparks of the electrical fluid, and produce an effect somewhat resembling that of lightning: but we cannot cause it to blaze like the Almighty, nor *thunder with a voice like Him.*

Imperfect, however, as the foregoing similitude may appear in some respects, it is sufficient to shew the fallacy of Mr. Paine's reasoning. "The doctrine of Re-"demption," says this writer, "has for its basis an idea "of pecuniary justice, and not that of moral justice. "If I owe a person money, and cannot pay him, and "he threatens to put me in prison, another person can "take the debt upon himself and pay it for me. But "if I have committed a *crime*, every circumstance of "the case is changed. Moral justice cannot take "the innocent for the guilty, even if the innocent would "offer itself. To suppose justice to do this, is to de-"stroy the principle of its existence, which is the thing "itself. It is then no longer justice; but is indiscrim-"inate revenge."* This objection, which is the same for substance as has been frequently urged by Socinians as well as deists, is founded in misrepresentation. It is not true that redemption has for its basis the idea of pecuniary justice, and not that of moral justice. That sin is called a *debt*, and the death of Christ a *price*, a *ransom*, &c. is true; but it is no unusual thing for moral obligations and deliverances to be expressed in language borrowed from pecuniary transactions. The obligations of a son to a father are commonly expressed by such terms as owing and paying: he *owes* a debt of obedience, and in yielding it, he *pays* a debt of gratitude. The same may be said of an obligation to

* Age of Reason, Part I. p. 20.

puniſhment. A murderer *owes* his life to the juſtice of his country; and when he ſuffers, he is ſaid to pay the awful debt. So alſo if a great character by ſuffering death could deliver his country, ſuch deliverance would be ſpoken of as obtained by the *price* of blood. No one miſtakes theſe things by underſtanding them of pecuniary tranſactions. In ſuch connexions, every one perceives that the terms are uſed not literally but metaphorically; and it is thus that they are to be underſtood with reference to the death of Chriſt. As ſin is not a pecuniary, but a moral debt; ſo the atonement for it is not a pecuniary, but a moral ranſom.

There is doubtleſs a ſufficient analogy between pecuniary and moral proceedings to juſtify the uſe of ſuch language, both in Scripture and in common life; and it is eaſy to perceive the advantages which ariſe from it; as beſides conveying much important truth, it renders it peculiarly impreſſive to the mind. But it is not always ſafe to reaſon from the former to the latter; much leſs is it juſt to affirm that the latter has for its baſis every principle which pertains to the former. The deliverance effected by the prince, in the caſe before ſtated, might with propriety be called a *redemption;* and the recollection of it under this idea would be very impreſſive to the minds of thoſe who were delivered. They would ſcarcely be able to ſee or think of their commander in chief, even though it might be years after the event, without being reminded of the *price* at which their pardon was obtained, and dropping a tear of ingenuous grief over their unworthy conduct on this account. Yet it would not be juſt to ſay that this redemption had for its baſis an idea of pecuniary juſtice, and not that of moral juſtice. It was moral juſtice which in this caſe was ſatisfied; not however in its ordinary form, but as exerciſed on an extraordinary occaſion; not the letter, but the ſpirit of it.

The Scripture doctrine of atonement being conveyed in language borrowed from pecuniary tranſactions, is not only improved by unbelievers into an argument

against the truth of the gospel, but has been the occasion of many errors amongst the professors of Christianity. Socinus on this ground attempts to explain away the necessity of a satisfaction. "God," says he, "is our *Creator*. Our sins are *debts* which we have "contracted with him; but every one may yield up "his right, and more especially God, who is the su- "preme Lord of all, and extolled in the Scriptures for "his liberality and goodness. Hence then it is evident "that God can pardon sins without any satisfaction "received."* *Others*, who profess to embrace the doctrine of satisfaction, have on the same ground perverted and abused it; objecting to the propriety of humble and continued applications for mercy, and presuming to claim the forgiveness of their sins, past, present and to come, as their legal right, and what it would be unjust in the Supreme Being, having received complete satisfaction, to withhold.

To the reasoning of Socinus, Dr. Owen judiciously replies by distinguishing between right as it respects *debts*, and as it respects *government*. The former he allows may be given up without a satisfaction, but not the latter. "Our sins," he adds, "are called debts, "not properly, but metaphorically."† This answer equally applies to those who pervert the doctrine, as to those who deny it; for though in matters of debt and credit a full satisfaction from a surety excludes the idea of *free* pardon on the part of the creditor, and admits of a *claim* on the part of the debtor, yet it is otherwise in relation to crimes. In the interposition of the prince, as stated above, an honourable expedient was adopted, by means of which, the sovereign was satisfied, and the exercise of mercy rendered consistent with just authority: but there was no less grace in the act of forgiveness, than if it had been without a satisfaction. However well pleased the king might be with

* Treatise of Jesus Christ the Saviour, Pt. III. Ch. I.

† Dissertation on Divine Justice, Ch. IX. § vii. viii.

the conduct of his ſon, the freeneſs of pardon was not at all diminiſhed by it; nor muſt the criminals come before him as claimants, but as ſupplicants, imploring mercy in the mediator's name.

Such are the leading ideas which the Scriptures give us of redemption by Jeſus Chriſt. The apoſtle Paul eſpecially teaches this doctrine with great preciſion: *Being juſtified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt: whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteouſneſs for the remiſſion of ſins that are paſt, through the forbearance of God; to declare,* I ſay, *at this time his righteouſneſs, that he might be juſt, and the juſtifier of him that believeth in Jeſus.** From this paſſage we may remark, Firſt, That the *grace* of God, as taught in the Scriptures, is not that kind of liberality which Socinians and Deiſts aſcribe to him, which ſets aſide the neceſſity of a ſatisfaction. Free grace, according to Paul, requires a *propitiation*, even the ſhedding of the Saviour's *blood*, as a medium through which it may be honourably communicated. Secondly, Redemption by Jeſus Chriſt was accompliſhed, not by a ſatisfaction that ſhould preclude the exerciſe of grace in forgiveneſs, but in which the diſpleaſure of God againſt ſin being manifeſted, mercy to the ſinner might be exerciſed without any ſuſpicion of his having relinquiſhed his regards for righteouſneſs. In *ſetting forth Jeſus Chriſt to be a propitiation*, he *declared his righteouſneſs for the remiſſion of ſins.* Thirdly, The righteouſneſs of God was not only declared when Chriſt was made a propitiatory ſacrifice; but continues to be manifeſted in the acceptance of believers through his name. He appears as *juſt* while acting the part of a *juſtifier* towards every one that *believeth in Jeſus.* Fourthly, That which is here applied to the bleſſings of forgiveneſs and acceptance with God, is applicable to all other ſpiritual bleſſings: all, according to the Scrip-

* Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26.

tures, are freely communicated through the same distinguished medium. See Ephes. i.*

* The Christian reader, it is presumed, may, from hence, obtain a clear view of the ends answered by the death of Christ, a subject which has occupied much attention amongst divines. Some have asserted that Christ, by his satisfaction, accomplished this only, "that God now, consistently with the honour of his justice, may "pardon (returning) sinners if he willeth so to do." This is doubtless true as far as it goes: but it makes no provision for the return of the sinner. This scheme, therefore, leaves the sinner to perish in impenitence and unbelief, and the Saviour without any security of seeing of the travail of his soul. For how can a sinner return without the power of the Holy Spirit? And the Holy Spirit, equally with every other spiritual blessing, is given in consideration of the death of Christ. Others, to remedy this defect, have considered the death of Christ as *purchasing* repentance and faith, as well as all other spiritual blessings, on behalf of the elect; and upon this ground have maintained that "God is bound, in strict justice, "in respect to Jesus Christ, to confer grace and glory on all those for "whom he died."† The writer of these pages acknowledges he never could perceive that any clear or determinate idea was conveyed by the term purchase in this connexion, nor does it appear to him to be a doctrine taught in the scriptures. The notion of grace being bestowed *on account of value received*, appears to him inconsistent with the freeness of grace itself, and with the perfection of the Divine Being, to whom nothing can be added or given which can lay him under obligation. If the salvation of sinners have been a commercial transaction, he might possibly have been bound, in strict right, with respect to Christ, to bestow grace and glory; but in that case there would have been no room for free remission, with respect to the Father. If sin be what Dr. Owen very justly contends it is, not a *debt*, but a *crime*; and if the satisfaction of Christ was not a reimbursement of lost property, but an expedient devised for the preserving of the divine character in the exercise of mercy, no such consequence will follow. God will be under no other obligation to save any sinner than that which spontaneously arises from his own nature, and the promise made to his Son.

If we say, A WAY WAS OPENED BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST FOR THE FREE AND CONSISTENT EXERCISE OF MERCY, IN ALL THE METHODS WHICH SOVEREIGN WISDOM SAW FIT TO ADOPT, perhaps we shall include every material idea which the Scripture gives us of that important event.

There are *three* kinds of blessings in particular, which God, out of regard to the death of his Son, bestows upon men.—First, He sends forth the gospel of salvation, accompanied with a free and indefinite invitation to embrace it, and an assurance that whosoever complies with the invitation, (for which there is no ability wanting in any man who possesses an honest heart) shall have everlasting life.

† See Dr. Owen's Dissertation on Divine Justice, Ch. XII. § v. vi. vii.

Theſe remarks may ſuffice to ſhew, not only that Mr. Paine's aſſertion has no truth in it, but that all thoſe profeſſors of Chriſtianity who have adopted his principle, have ſo far deviated from the doctrine of redemption as it is taught in the Scriptures.

As to what Mr. Paine alleges, that the innocent ſuffering for the guilty, even though it be with his own conſent, is contrary to every principle of moral juſtice, he affirms the ſame of God's *viſiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children.** But this is a truth evident by univerſal experience. It is ſeen every day, in every part of the world. If Mr. Paine indulge in intemperance, and leave children behind him, they may feel the conſequences of his miſconduct when he is in his grave. The ſins of the father may thus be viſited upon the children to the third and fourth generation. It would, however, be their *affliction* only, and not their puniſhment. Yet ſuch viſitations are wiſely ordered as a motive to ſobriety. Nor is it between parents and children only that ſuch a connexion exiſts, as that the happineſs of one depends upon the conduct of others: a ſlight ſurvey of ſociety in its various relations, muſt convince us that the ſame princi-

This favour is beſtowed ON SINNERS AS SINNERS. God *giveth the true bread from heaven* in this way to many who never receive it. He inviteth thoſe to the goſpel ſupper who refuſe and *make light of it*, John vi. 32, 36. Matt. xxii. 4, 5.

Secondly, He beſtows his Holy Spirit to renew and ſanctify the ſoul: gives a new heart, and a right ſpirit, and takes away the heart of ſtone. *Chriſt is exalted to give repentance.* Acts v. 31. *Unto us it is given in behalf of Chriſt, to believe in him.* Phil. i. 29. *We have obtained like precious faith through the righteouſneſs of God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* 2 Pet. i. 1. This favour is conferred on ELECT SINNERS. See Acts xiii. 48. Rom. viii. 28, 29 30.

Thirdly, Through the ſame medium is given the free pardon of all our ſins, acceptance with God, power to become the ſons of God, and the promiſe of everlaſting life. *Your ſins are forgiven you, for his name's ſake.* 1 John, ii. 12. *God, for Chriſt's ſake, hath forgiven you.* Epheſ. iv. 32. *We are accepted in the Beloved.* Epheſ. i. 6. *By means of his death we receive the promiſe of eternal inheritance.* Heb. ix. 15. This kind of bleſſings is conferred on BELIEVING SINNERS.

* Age of Reaſon, Part I. p. 4. *Note.*

ple pervades creation. To call this injuſtice, is to fly in the face of the Creator. With ſuch an objector I have nothing to do; *He that reproveth God, let him anſwer it.*

If the idea of the innocent ſuffering in the room of the guilty were, in all caſes, inadmiſſible, and utterly repugnant to the human underſtanding, how came the uſe of *expiatory ſacrifices* to prevail as it has, in every age and nation? Whether the idea firſt proceeded from a divine command, as Chriſtians generally believe, or whatever was its origin, it has approved itſelf to the minds of men; and not of the moſt uncultivated part of mankind only, but of the moſt learned and polite. The ſacrifices of the Gentiles, it is true, were full of ſuperſtition, and widely different, as might be expected, from thoſe which were regulated by the Scriptures; but the general principle is the ſame: All agree in the idea of the diſpleaſure of the Deity being appeaſable by an innocent victim being ſacrificed in the place of the guilty. The idea of expiatory ſacrifices, and of a mediation founded upon them, is beautifully expreſſed in the book of Job; a book not only of great antiquity, but which ſeems to have obtained the approbation of Mr. Paine, having, as he ſuppoſes, been written by a Gentile. *And it was ſo, that, after the Lord had ſpoken theſe words unto Job, the Lord ſaid to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled againſt thee, and againſt thy two friends: for ye have not ſpoken of me the thing that is right, as my ſervant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now ſeven bullocks and ſeven rams, and go to my ſervant Job, and offer up for yourſelves a burnt-offering, and my ſervant Job ſhall pray for you; for him will I accept: leſt I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not ſpoken of me the thing which is right, like my ſervant Job. So Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, went and did according as the Lord commanded them: the Lord alſo accepted Job.** The objections which are now made to

* Chap. xlii. 7, 8, 9.

the sacrifice of Christ, equally apply to all expiatory sacrifices; the offering up of which, had not the former superseded them, would have continued to this day.

If an innocent character offer to die in the room of a guilty fellow-creature, it is not ordinarily accepted, nor would it be proper that it should. For he may have no just right to dispose of his life; or if he have, he has no power to resume it: there may likewise be no such relation between the parties, as that the suffering of the one should express displeasure against the conduct of the other. Besides this, there may be no great and good end accomplished by such a substitution, to society; the loss sustained by the death of the one might be equal, if not superior, to the gain from the life of the other. If the evil to be endured might be survived; if the relation between the parties were such that in the sufferings of the one, mankind would be impressed with the evil of the other; and if by such a proceeding great advantage would accrue to society, instead of being accounted inadmissible, it would be reckoned right, and wise, and good. If a dignified individual, by enduring some temporary severity from an offended nation, could appease their displeasure, and thereby save his country from the destroying sword, who would not admire his disinterested conduct? And if the offended, from motives of humanity, were contented with expressing their displeasure, by transferring the effect of it from a whole nation to an individual, who thus stepped forward on their behalf, would their conduct be censured as "indiscriminate revenge?" The truth is, the atonement of Christ affords a display of justice on too large a scale, and on too humbling a principle, to approve itself to a contracted, selfish, and haughty mind.

CHAP. V.

The conſiſtency of the Scripture Doctrine of Redemption, with the modern opinion of the Magnitude of Creation.

IT is common for Deiſts to impute the progreſs of their principles to *the prevalence of true philoſophy*. The world, they ſay, is more enlightened; and a great number of diſcoveries are progreſſively making, which render the credibility of the Scriptures more and more ſuſpicious. It is now a commonly received opinion, for inſtance, among men of ſcience, that this world is but a point in creation; that every planet is a world, and all the fixed ſtars ſo many ſuns in the centres of ſo many ſyſtems of worlds; and that as every part of creation within our knowledge teems with life, and as God hath made nothing in vain, it is highly probable that all theſe worlds are inhabited by intelligent beings, who are capable of knowing and adoring their Creator. But if this be true, how incredible is it that ſo great a portion of regard ſhould be exerciſed by the Supreme Being towards man as the Scriptures repreſent; how incredible, eſpecially, it muſt appear to a thinking mind, that Deity ſhould become incarnate, ſhould take human nature into the moſt intimate union with himſelf, and thereby raiſe it to ſuch ſingular eminency in the ſcale of being, though compared with the whole of creation, if we comprehend even the whole ſpecies, it will be leſs than a neſt of inſects compared with the unnumbered millions of animated beings which inhabit the earth.

This objection, there is reaſon to think, has had a very conſiderable influence on the ſpeculating part of mankind. Mr. Paine, in the Firſt Part of his *Age of Reaſon*,* has laboured, after his manner, to make the

* Page 40—47.

moſt of it, and thereby to diſparage Chriſtianity. "Though it is not a direct article of the Chriſtian "ſyſtem," he ſays, "that this world, which we in- "habit, is the whole of the habitable creation; yet it "is ſo worked up therewith, from what is called the "Moſaic account of the creation, the ſtory of Eve and "the apple, and the counterpart of that ſtory, the "death of the Son of God, that to believe otherwiſe, "that is, to believe that God created a plurality of "worlds, at leaſt as numerous as what we call ſtars, "renders the Chriſtian ſyſtem of faith, at once little "and ridiculous, and ſcatters it in the mind like feath- "ers in the air. The two beliefs cannot be held to- "gether in the ſame mind; and he who thinks he be- "lieves both, has thought but little of either."*

Again—Having diſcourſed on the vaſt extent of creation, he aſks, "But in the midſt of theſe reflec- "tions, what are we to think of the Chriſtian ſyſtem "of faith, that forms itſelf upon the idea of only one "world, and that of no greater extent than twenty-five "thouſand miles?"—"From whence could ariſe the "ſolitary and ſtrange conceit that the Almighty, who "had millions of worlds equally dependent on his "protection, ſhould quit the care of all the reſt, and "come to die in our world becauſe they ſay one man, "and one woman had eaten an apple? And on the "other hand, are we to ſuppoſe that every world in "the boundleſs creation had an Eve, an apple, a ſer- "pent, and a Redeemer? In this caſe, the perſon who "is irreverently called the Son of God, and ſometimes "God himſelf, would have nothing elſe to do than to "travel from world to world, in an endleſs ſucceſſion "of death, with ſcarce a momentary interval of life."†

To animadvert upon all the extravagant and offen- ſive things, even in ſo ſmall a part of Mr. Paine's per- formance as the above quotation, would be an irkſome taſk. A few remarks, however, may not be improper.

Firſt—Though Mr. Paine is pleaſed to ſay, in his uſual ſtyle of naked aſſertion, that "the two beliefs

* Page 40. † Page 46.

" cannot be held together; and that he who thinks he " believes both, has thought but little of either;" yet he cannot be ignorant, that many who have admitted the one, have, at the same time, held fast the other. Mr. Paine is certainly not overloaded with modesty, when comparing his own abilities and acquisitions with those of other men: but I am inclined to think, that, with all his assurance, he will not pretend that Bacon, or Boyle, or Newton, to mention no more, had thought but little of philosophy or Christianity. I imagine it would be within the compass of truth, were I to say, they bestowed twenty times more thought upon both these subjects than ever Mr. Paine did. His extreme ignorance of Christianity, at least, is manifest, by the numerous gross blunders of which he has been detected.

Secondly—Supposing the Scripture account of the Creation to be inconsistent with the ideas which modern philosophers entertain of its extent; yet it is not what Mr. Paine represents it. It certainly does not teach, " that this world, which we inhabit, is the whole " of the habitable creation." Mr. Paine will not deny, that it exhibits a world of happiness, and a world of misery, though in the career of his extravagance, he seems to have overlooked it.

Thirdly—If the two beliefs, as Mr. Paine calls them, cannot be consistently held together, we need not be at a loss to determine which to relinquish. All the reasoning in favour of a multiplicity of worlds, inhabited by intelligent beings, amounts to no more than *a strong probability*. No man can properly be said to believe it: it is not a matter of faith, but of opinion. It is an opinion too that has taken place of other opinions, which, in their day, were admired by the philosophical part of mankind as much as this is in ours. Mr. Paine seems to wish to have it thought, that the doctrine of a multiplicity of inhabited worlds is a matter of *demonstration*: but the existence of a number of heavenly bodies, whose revolutions are under the direction of certain laws, and whose returns, there-

fore, are the objects of human calculation, does not prove that they are all inhabited by intelligent beings. I do not deny that, from other conſiderations, the thing may be highly probable; but it is no more than a probability. Now, before we give up a doctrine, which, if it were even to prove fallacious, has no dangerous conſequences attending it; and which, if it ſhould be found a truth, involves our eternal ſalvation, we ſhould endeavour to have a more ſolid ground than mere opinion on which to take our ſtand.

But I do not wiſh to avail myſelf of theſe obſervations, as I am under no apprehenſions that the cauſe in which I engage requires them. ADMITTING THAT THE INTELLIGENT CREATION IS AS EXTENSIVE AS MODERN PHILOSOPHY SUPPOSES, THE CREDIBILITY OF REDEMPTION IS NOT THEREBY WEAKENED; BUT, ON THE CONTRARY, IN MANY RESPECTS, IS STRENGTHENED AND AGGRANDIZED. I ſhall offer a few obſervations on each of the branches of the above poſition.

The Scripture doctrine of Redemption, it is acknowledged, ſuppoſes that man, mean and little as he is in the ſcale of being, has occupied a peculiar portion of the divine regard. It requires to be noticed, however, that the enemies of revelation, in order, it ſhould ſeem, to give the greater force to their objection, diminiſh the importance of man, as a creature of God, beyond what its friends can admit. Though Mr. Paine expreſſeth his "hope of happineſs beyond this "life;" and though ſome other deiſtical writers have admitted the immortality of the ſoul; yet this is more than others of them will allow. The hope of a future ſtate, as we have ſeen, is objected to by many of them as a *ſelfiſh* principle; and others of them have attempted to hold it up to ridicule. But the immortality of man is a doctrine which Redemption ſuppoſes; and if this be allowed, man is not ſo inſignificant a being as they might wiſh to conſider him. A being that poſſeſſes an immortal mind, a mind capable of increaſing knowledge, and conſequently of increaſing happineſs or miſery, in an endleſs duration, cannot be in-

ſignificant. It is no exaggeration to ſay that the ſalvation of one ſoul, according to the ſcriptural account of things, is of inconceivably greater moment than the temporal ſalvation of a nation, or of all the nations in the world, for ten thouſand ages. The eternal ſalvation, therefore, of a number of loſt ſinners, which no man can number, however it may be a matter of infinite condeſcenſion in the great Supreme to accompliſh, is not an object for creatures, even the moſt exalted, to conſider as of ſmall account.

Having premiſed thus much, I ſhall proceed, in the firſt place, to offer a few obſervations in proof that THERE IS NOTHING IN THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF REDEMPTION WHICH IS INCONSISTENT WITH THE MODERN OPINION OF THE MAGNITUDE OF CREATION.

I. *Let creation be as extenſive as it may, and the number of worlds be multiplied to the utmoſt boundary to which imagination can reach, there is no proof that any of them, except men and angels, have apoſtatized from God.*

If our world be only a ſmall province, ſo to ſpeak, of God's vaſt empire, there is reaſon to hope, that it is the only part of it where ſin has entered, except among the fallen angels; and that the endleſs myriads of intelligent beings, in other worlds, are all the hearty friends of virtue, of order, and of God.

If this be true, (and there is nothing in philoſophy or divinity, I believe, to diſcredit it,) then Mr. Paine need not have ſuppoſed, if he could have ſuppreſſed the pleaſure of the witticiſm, that the Son of God ſhould have to travel from world to world in the character of a Redeemer.

II. *Let creation be ever ſo extenſive, there is nothing inconſiſtent with reaſon in ſuppoſing that ſome one particular part of it ſhould be choſen out of the reſt, as a theatre on which the great Author of all things would perform his moſt glorious works.*

Every empire that has been founded in this world has had ſome one particular ſpot where thoſe actions were performed, from whence its glory has ariſen.

The glory of the Cæsars was founded on the event of a battle fought near a very inconsiderable city: and why might not this world, though less than "twenty-five "thousand miles in circumference," be chosen as the theatre on which God would bring about events that should fill his whole empire with glory and joy? It would be as reasonable to plead the insignificance of *Actium* or *Agincourt* as an objection to the competency of the victories there obtained, (supposing them to have been on the side of righteousness) to fill the respective empires of Rome and Britain with glory, as that of our world to fill the whole empire of God with matter of joy and everlasting praise. The truth is, the comparative dimension of our world is of no account. If it be large enough for the accomplishment of events which are sufficient to occupy the minds of all intelligences, that is all that is required.

III. *If any one part of God's creation, rather than another, possessed a superior fitness to become a theatre on which he might display his glory, it should seem to be that part where the greatest efforts have been made to dishonour him.*

A rebellious province in an empire, would be the fittest place in it to display the justice, goodness, and benignity of a government. Here would naturally be erected the banner of righteousness; here the war would be carried on; here pardons and punishments to different characters would be awarded; and here the honours of the government would be established on such a basis, that the remotest parts of the empire might hear, and fear, and learn obedience. The part that is diseased, whether in the body natural, or the body politic, is the part to which the remedy is directed. Let there be what number of worlds there may, full of intelligent creatures; yet if there be but one world which is guilty and miserable, thither will be directed the operations of mercy. The good shepherd of the sheep will leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and seek and save that which is lost.

IV. *The events brought to paſs in this world, little and inſignificant as it may be, are competent to fill all and every part of God's dominions with everlaſting and increaſing joy.*

Mental enjoyment differs widely from corporeal: the beſtowment of the one upon a great number of objects is neceſſarily attended with a diviſion of it into parts; and thoſe who come in for a ſhare of it diminiſh the quantity remaining for others that come after them; but not ſo the other. An intellectual object requires only to be known, and it is equally capable of affording enjoyment to a million as to an individual; to a world as to a million; and to the whole univerſe, be it ever ſo extenſive, as to a world. If, as the Scriptures inform us, *God was manifeſt in the fleſh, juſtified in the ſpirit, ſeen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory;* if there be enough in this *myſterious* tranſaction to fill with joy the hearts of all who believe it; if it be ſo intereſting that the moſt exalted intelligences become comparatively indifferent to every other object, *deſiring to look into it;* then is it ſufficient to *fill all things*, and to exhibit the divine glory *in all places of his dominion.**

Mr. Paine allows that it is not a direct article of the Chriſtian ſyſtem that there is not a plurality of inhabited worlds; yet he affirms it is ſo *worked up* with the Scripture account, that to believe the latter we muſt relinquiſh the former, as little and ridiculous.

The Scriptures, it is true, do not teach the doctrine of a multitude of inhabited worlds; but neither do they teach the contrary. Neither the one nor the other forms any part of their deſign. The object they keep in view, though Mr. Paine may term it "little "and ridiculous," is infinitely ſuperior to this, both as to utility and magnitude. They were not given to teach us aſtronomy, or geography, or civil government, or any ſcience which relates to the preſent life only; therefore they do not determine upon any ſyſtem of

* 1 Pet. i. 12. Epheſ. iv. 10. Pſal. ciii. 22.

any of these sciences. These are things upon which reason is competent to judge, sufficiently, at least, for all the purposes of human life, without a revelation from heaven. The great object of Revelation is, to instruct us in things which pertain to our everlasting peace; and as to other things, even the rise and fall of the mightiest empires, they are only touched in an incidental manner, as the mention of them might be necessary to high purposes. The great empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome are predicted and described in the Scriptures, by the rising and ravaging of so many *beasts* of prey. Speaking of the European part of the earth, which was inhabited by the posterity of Japhet, they do not go about to give an exact geographical description of it; but, by a synecdoche, call it *the isles of the Gentiles*;* and this, as I suppose, because its eastern boundary, the Archipelago, or Grecian *Islands*, were situated contiguous to the Holy Land. And thus, when speaking of the whole creation, they call it *the heavens and the earth*, as being the whole that comes within the reach of our senses.

It is no dishonour to the Scriptures that they keep to their professed end. Though they give us no system of astronomy; yet they urge us to study the works of God, and teach us to adore him upon every discovery. Though they give us no system of geography; yet they encourage us to avail ourselves of observation and experience to obtain one, seeing the whole earth is given in prophecy to the Messiah, and is marked out as the field in which his servants are to labour. Though they determine not upon any mode or system of civil government; yet they teach obedience, in civil matters, to all. And though their attention be mainly directed to things which pertain to the life to come; yet by attending to their instructions, we are also fitted for the labours and sufferings of the present life.

The Scriptures are written in a *popular* style, as best adapted to their great end. If the salvation of philos-

* Gen. x. 5. Isai. xlix. 1.

ophers only had been their object, the language might possibly have been somewhat different; though even this may be a matter of doubt, since the style is suited to the subject, and to the great end which they had in view: But being addressed to men of every degree, it was highly proper that the language should be fitted to every capacity, and suited to their common modes of conception. They speak of *the foundations of the earth*, *the ends of the earth*, *the greater and lesser lights* in the heavens, the sun *rising*, *standing still*, and *going down*, and many other things in the same way. If deists object to these modes of speaking as conveying ideas which are inconsistent with the true theory of the heavens and the earth, let them, if they can, substitute others which are consistent: let them, in their common conversation, when describing the revolutions of evening and morning, speak of the earth as rising and going down instead of the sun, and the same with regard to the revolutions of the planets, and see if men in common will better understand them, or whether they would be able even to understand one another. The constant use of such language, even by philosophers themselves, in common conversation, sufficiently proves the futility and unfairness of their objecting to Revelation on this account. The popular ideas on these subjects are as much "worked up" in the common conversation of philosophers, as they are in the Scriptures.

By the drift of Mr. Paine's writings, he seems to wish to convey the idea, that so contracted were the views of the scriptural writers, that even the *globularity* of the earth was unknown to them. If, however, such a sentence as that of Job, *He hangeth the earth upon nothing*,* had been found in any of the old heathen writers, he would readily have concluded that "this idea was familiar to the ancients." Or if a heathen poet had uttered such language as that of Isaiah—*Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted*

* Chap. xxvi. 7.

as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before HIM *are as nothing; and they are counted to* HIM *less than nothing and vanity*, he might have been applauded as possessing a mind as large, and nearly as well informed as the geniuses of modern times. But the truth is, the scriptural writers were not intent on displaying the greatness of their own conception, nor even of creation itself; but rather of the glory of HIM *who filleth all in all.*

The foregoing observations may suffice to remove Mr. Paine's objection; but if, in addition to them, it can be proved, that upon the supposition of a great number of inhabited worlds, Christianity, instead of appearing "little and ridiculous," is the more enlarged, and that some of its difficulties are the more easily accounted for, this will be still more satisfactory. Let us, therefore, proceed, Secondly, to offer evidence that THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF REDEMPTION IS STRENGTHENED AND AGGRANDIZED BY THE SUPPOSED MAGNITUDE OF CREATION.

I. *The Scripture teaches, that God's regard to man is an astonishing instance of condescension, and that on account of the disparity between him and the celestial creation.*

When I consider thy heavens, saith David, *the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him; and the son of man, that thou visitest him? Will God in very deed* saith Solomon, *dwell with men upon the earth?**

The divine condescension towards man is a truth upon any system; but upon the supposition of the heavenly bodies being so many inhabited worlds, it is a truth full of amazement, and the foregoing language of David and Solomon is forcible beyond all conception. The idea of HIM, who *upholds* a Universe of

* Ps. viii. 3, 4. 2 Chron. vi. 18. In this part of the subject considerable use is made of the Scriptures; but it is only for the purpose of ascertaining *what the Christian doctrine of redemption is*: and this is undoubtedly consistent with every rule of just reasoning, as, whether they be true or false, they are the standard by which this doctrine is to be measured.

such extent *by the word of his power*, becoming incarnate, residing with men, and setting up his kingdom amongst them, that he might raise them to eternal glory, as much surpasseth all that philosophy calls great and noble, as the Creator surpasseth the the work of his hands.

II. *The Scriptures inform us that before creation was begun, our world was marked out by Eternal Wisdom as the theatre of its joyful operations.*

This idea is forcibly expressed in the eighth chapter of Proverbs: *Before the mountains were settled; before the hills, was I brought forth—while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there; when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: when he established the clouds above; when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.*

On this interesting passage I shall offer a few remarks. First, Amongst the variety of objects which are here specified as the works of God, *the earth* is mentioned as being in a sort his peculiar property. Doubtless the whole creation is the Lord's; but none of his other works are here claimed as his own, in the manner that the earth is. It is called *his* earth. And this seems to intimate a design of rendering it the grand theatre on which his greatest work should be performed; a work that should fill all creation with joy and wonder. Secondly, The wisdom of God is described as *rejoicing* in the contemplation of this part of the creation. Whether *wisdom*, in this passage, be understood of the promised Messiah, or of a divine attribute personified, it makes no difference as to the argument. Allow it to mean the latter; and that the rejoicing of wisdom is a figurative mode of speaking, like that of *mercy rejoicing*

against judgment;* still Redemption by Jesus Christ is the object concerning which it was exercised. Nothing less can be intimated than this, that the earth was the place marked out by Eternal Wisdom as the theatre of its joyful operations. Thirdly, The *habitable part* of the earth was more especially the object of Wisdom's joyful contemplation. The abodes of men, which, through sin, had become scenes of abomination, by the interposition of the Mediator, were to become the abodes of righteousness. Here the Serpent's head was to be bruised; his schemes confounded, and his works destroyed: and that by the *Woman's seed*, the human nature which he had despised and degraded. Here a trophy was to be raised to the glory of sovereign grace, and millions of souls, delivered from everlasting destruction, were to present an offering of praise to HIM *that loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood*. Here, in a word, the peculiar glory of the Godhead was to be displayed in such a manner as to afford a lesson of joyful amazement to the whole creation, *throughout all ages* of time, yea, *world without end!*† Lastly, Not only were the abodes of man contemplated with *rejoicing*, but the *sons of men* themselves regarded with *delight*. The operations of Eternal Wisdom were directed to their salvation; and their salvation was appointed to become, in return, a mirror in which the whole creation should behold the operations of Eternal Wisdom. This expressive passage contains a fulness of meaning, let the extent of the intelligent creation be what it may: but if it be of that extent which modern philosophy supposes, it contains a greater fulness still. It perfectly accords with all those ideas suggested, of this earth being the chosen theatre, upon which events should be brought to pass that shall fill creation with everlasting joy; and well they may, if the prospect of them, even rejoiced the heart of God!

* James ii. 13. † Ephes. iii. 21.

III. *The mediation of Chriſt is repreſented in Scripture as bringing the whole creation into union with the Church or people of God.*

In the diſpenſation of the fulneſs of times, it is ſaid that God would *gather together in one, all things in Chriſt, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him.** Again, *It pleaſed the Father that in him ſhould all fulneſs dwell; and (having made peace through the blood of his croſs) by him to reconcile all things unto himſelf; by him, I ſay, whether things in earth, or things in heaven.*†

The language here uſed, ſuppoſes that the introduction of ſin has effected a diſunion between men and the other parts of God's creation. It is natural to ſuppoſe it ſhould be ſo. If a province of a great empire riſe up in rebellion againſt the lawful government, all communication between the inhabitants of ſuch provinces, and the faithful adherents to order and obedience, muſt be at an end. A line of ſeparation would be immediately drawn by the ſovereign, and all intercourſe between the one and the other prohibited. Nor would it leſs accord with the inclination than with the duty of all the friends of righteouſneſs to withdraw their connexion from thoſe who were in rebellion againſt the ſupreme authority, and the general good: It muſt have been thus with regard to the holy angels on man's apoſtaſy. Thoſe who, at the creation of our world, had *ſung together*, and even *ſhouted for joy*, would now retire in diſguſt and holy indignation.

But through the mediation of Chriſt a re-union is effected. By the blood of the croſs we have peace with God; and, being reconciled to him, are united to all who love him throughout the whole extent of creation. If Paul could addreſs the Corinthians concerning one of their excluded members, who had been

* Epheſ. i. 10. † Col. i. 19, 20.

brought to repentance, *To whom ye forgive any thing, I alſo;* much more would the friends of righteouſneſs ſay in their addreſſes to the great Supreme, concerning an excluded member from the moral ſyſtem, *To whom* THOU *forgiveſt any thing, we alſo!* Hence angels acknowledge Chriſtians as *brethren*, and become miniſtering ſpirits to them while inhabitants of the preſent world.*

There is another conſideration which muſt tend to cement the holy part of God's creation to the Church; which is, their being *all united under one head.* A central point of union has a great effect in cementing mankind. We ſee this every day in people who ſit under the ſame miniſtry, or ſerve under the ſame commander, or are ſubjects of the ſame prince: whether miniſter, general, or prince, if they *love* him, they will be more or leſs united together under him.

Now it is a part of the reward of our Redeemer, for his great humiliation, that he ſhould be exalted as head over the whole creation of God. *Being found in faſhion as a man, he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs. Wherefore God alſo hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow,* of heavenly beings, of earthly, and of thoſe *under the earth. He is the head of all principality and power. God raiſed him from the dead, and ſet him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but alſo in that which is to come: and put all things under his feet; and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulneſs of him that filleth all in all.*†

Theſe paſſages, it is true, repreſent the dominion of Chriſt as extending over the whole creation, enemies

* Rev. xix. 10. Heb. i. 14.

† Phil. ii. 8, 9, 10. Col. ii. 10. Epheſ. i. 20, 21, 22.

as well as friends, and things as well as perſons. But if the very enemies of God are cauſed to ſubſerve the purpoſes of Redemption, much more his friends: what the others do by conſtraint, theſe do willingly; and the conſideration of their having *one head* muſt make them feel, as it were, nearer akin. And as Chriſt is *head over all things to the Church, which is his body*, it is hereby intimated, that the happineſs of the Church is, by theſe means, abundantly enlarged.

To what extent creation reaches I do not pretend to know: be that, however, as it may, the foregoing paſſages teach us to conſider the influence of Redemption as commenſurate with it; and in proportion to the magnitude of the one, ſuch muſt be the influence of the other as to the accompliſhment of re-union, and the reſtoration of happineſs.

IV. *Through the mediation of Chriſt not only is the whole creation repreſented as augmenting the bleſſedneſs of the Church; but the Church as augmenting the bleſſedneſs of the whole creation.*

As one member, be it ever ſo ſmall, cannot ſuffer, without the whole body, in ſome degree, ſuffering with it; ſo if we conſider our world as a member of the great body, or ſyſtem of being, it might naturally be ſuppoſed that the ill or well being of the former would, in ſome meaſure, affect the happineſs of the latter. The fall of a planet from its orbit, in the ſolar ſyſtem, would probably have a leſs effect upon the other planets, than that of man from the moral ſyſtem upon the other parts of God's intelligent creation. And when it is conſidered that man is a member of the body *diſtinguiſhed* by ſovereign favour, as poſſeſſing a nature which the Son of God delighted to honour, by taking it upon himſelf, the intereſt which the Univerſe at large, may have in his fall and recovery, may be greatly augmented. The leproſy of Miriam was an event that affected the whole camp of Iſrael; nor did they proceed on their journies till ſhe was reſtored to her ſituation: and it is not unnat-

ural to ſuppoſe, that ſomething analogous to this would be the effect of the fall and recovery of man on the whole creation.

The happineſs of the redeemed is not the ultimate end of Redemption, nor the only happineſs which will be produced by it. God is repreſented in the Scriptures, as conferring his favours in ſuch a way as that no creature ſhall be bleſſed *merely for his own ſake*, but that he might communicate his bleſſedneſs to others. With whatever powers, talents, or advantages we are endued, it is not merely for our gratification, but that we may contribute to the general good. God gives diſcernment to the eye, ſpeech to the tongue, ſtrength to the arm, and agility to the feet; not for the gratification of theſe members, but for the accommodation of the body. It is the ſame in other things. God *bleſſed* Abraham; and wherefore? That he might *be a bleſſing*. He bleſſed his poſterity after him; and for what purpoſe? That *in them all the nations of the earth might be bleſſed*.* Though Iſrael was a nation *choſen* and *beloved* of God; yet it was not for their righteouſneſs, nor merely with a view to their happineſs, that they were thus diſtinguiſhed: but that he *might perform the oath which he ſware unto their fathers*;† the ſubſtance of which was, that the true religion ſhould proſper amongſt them, and be communicated by them to all other nations. The ungodly part of the Jewiſh nation viewed things, it is true, in a different light: they valued themſelves as the favourites of Heaven, and looked down upon other nations with contemptuous diſlike. But it was otherwiſe with the godly; they entered into the ſpirit of the promiſe made to their fathers. Hence they prayed that *God would be merciful to them, and bleſs them, and cauſe his face to ſhine upon them*; to the end THAT HIS WAY MIGHT BE KNOWN UPON EARTH, AND HIS SAVING HEALTH AMONG ALL NATIONS.‡

* Gen. xii. 2. xxii. 18.

† Deut. ix. 5. vii. 7, 8. ‡ Pſal. lxvii.

The same spirit was manifested by the apostles and primitive Christians. They perceived that all that rich measure of gifts and graces by which they were distinguished was given them with the design of their communicating it to others; and this was their constant aim. Paul felt himself *a debtor* both to Jews and Greeks, and spent his life in diffusing the blessings of the gospel, though in return he was continually treated as an evil doer; and the same might be said of the other apostles.

Nor is this social principle confined to the present life. According to Scripture representations the happiness of saints in glory will be conferred on them, not that it may stop there, but be communicated to the whole moral system. The redemption of the Church has already added to the blessedness of other holy intelligences. It has furnished a new medium by which the glory of the divine perfections is beheld and admired. To explore the wisdom of God in his works is the constant employment of holy angels, and that in which consists a large proportion of their felicity. Prior to the accomplishment of the work of redemption, they contemplated the divine character through the medium of creation and providence; but NOW *unto principalities and powers, in heavenly places, is known,* BY THE CHURCH, *the manifold wisdom of God.** And so much does this last display of divine glory exceed all that have gone before it, that those who have once obtained a view of it through this medium, will certainly prefer it to every other: *Which things the angels desire to look into.*† They do not, however, become indifferent to any of the divine operations. Creation and providence continue to attract their attention, and are abundantly more interesting: they now study them according to the order in which they exist in the divine mind, that is, in subserviency to Redemption.‡

* Ephes. iii. 10. † 1 Pet. i. 12.

‡ Col. i. 16. *by* him, and *for* him.

But that which is already accompliſhed, is but ſmall in compariſon of what is in reſerve. At the final judgment, when all the faithful will be collected together, they will become a medium through which the Lord Jeſus will be *glorified* and *admired* by the whole creation. *He ſhall come to be glorified* IN *his ſaints; and to be admired* IN *all them that believe—in that day.** It is a truth that the ſaints of God will themſelves glorify and admire their great Deliverer, but not the truth of this paſſage; the deſign of which is to repreſent them as a medium through which he ſhall be glorified by all the friends of God in the univerſe. The great Phyſician will appear with his recovered millions; every one of whom will afford evidence of his diſintereſted love, and efficacious blood, to the whole admiring Creation.

Much the ſame ideas are conveyed to us by thoſe repreſentations in which the whole creation are either called upon to rejoice on account of our Redemption, or deſcribed as actually rejoicing and praiſing the Redeemer. Thus David having ſpoken of God's mercy which was *from everlaſting to everlaſting towards the children of men;* addreſſes ALL HIS WORKS, IN ALL PLACES OF HIS DOMINION, *to bleſs his name.*† John alſo informs us, ſaying, *I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thouſand times ten thouſand, and thouſands of thouſands; ſaying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honour, and glory, and bleſſing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and ſuch as are in the ſea, and all that are in them, heard I, ſaying, Bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.*‡

The phraſeology of theſe paſſages is ſuch, that no one can reaſonably doubt whether the writers intended by it to expreſs the whole upright intelligent crea-

* 2 Theſſ. i. 10. † Pſ. ciii. 17—22. ‡ Rev. v. 11, 12, 13.

tion, be it of what extent it may: and if it be of that extent which philoſophy ſuppoſes, the greater muſt be the influence and importance of the work of Redemption.

V. *The Scriptures give us to expect that the earth itſelf, as well as its redeemed inhabitants, ſhall at a future period be purified, and re-united to the holy empire of God.*

We are taught to pray, and conſequently to hope, that when *the kingdom of God* ſhall univerſally prevail, *his will ſhall be done on earth as it is* now *in heaven*:* but if ſo, earth itſelf muſt become, as it were, a part of heaven.

That we form a clear and comprehenſive view of our Lord's words, and of this part of the ſubject, be it obſerved, that the Scriptures ſometimes diſtinguiſh between *the kingdom of God*, and *that of Chriſt*. Though the object of both be the triumph of truth and righteouſneſs, yet the mode of adminiſtration is different. The one is natural, the other delegated: the latter is in ſubſerviency to the former, and ſhall be finally ſucceeded by it. Chriſt is repreſented as acting in our world by delegation: as if a king had commiſſioned his ſon to go and reduce a certain rebellious province, and reſtore it to his dominion. The period allotted for this work extends from the time of the revelation of the promiſed Seed, to the day of judgment. The operations are *progreſſive*. If it had ſeemed good in his ſight, he could have overturned the power of Satan in a ſhort period; but his wiſdom ſaw fit to accompliſh it by degrees. Like the commander of an invading army, he firſt takes poſſeſſion of one poſt, then of another, then of a third, and ſo on, till by and by the whole country falls into his hands. And as the progreſs of a conqueror would be more rapid after a few of the ſtrongeſt fortreſſes had ſurrendered, (inaſmuch as things would then approach faſt to a criſis, to a breaking up,

* Matt. vi. 10.

as it were, of the power of the enemy,) ſo it has been with the kingdom of Chriſt, and ſuch will be its progreſs before the end of time. In the early ages of the world, but little was done. At one time, true religion appears to have exiſted only in a few families. Afterwards it aſſumed a national appearance. After this it was addreſſed to all nations. And before the cloſe of time all nations ſhall be ſubjected to the obedience of Chriſt. This ſhall be the *breaking up* of Satan's empire. Now as on the conqueſt of a rebellious province the delegated authority of the conqueror would ceaſe, and the natural government of the empire reſume its original form; ſo Chriſt is repreſented as *delivering up the kingdom to the Father, that God may be All in All.* This is the ultimatum of the Meſſiah's kingdom; and this appears to be the object for which he taught his diſciples to pray.

As on the conqueſt of a rebellious province, ſome would be pardoned, and others puniſhed; as every veſtige of rebellion would be effaced, and law, peace and order flow in their ancient channels; ſuch a period might with propriety be termed *a reſtitution of all things.** Such will be the event of the laſt judgment, which is deſcribed as the concluding exerciſe of the delegated authority of Chriſt.

And as on the conqueſt of a rebellious province, and the reſtitution of peace and order, that province, inſtead of being any longer ſeparate from the reſt of the empire, would become a component part of it, and the king's will would be done in it, as it had been done without interruption in the loyal part of his territories; ſuch is the repreſentation given with reſpect to our world, and the holy parts of God's dominions. A period will arrive when the will of God ſhall be done on earth as it is now done in heaven. This, however, will never be the caſe while any veſtige of moral evil

* Acts iii. 10.

remains. It must be after the general conflagration; which, though it will destroy every kind of evil, root and branch, that now prevails upon the face of the earth, and will terminate the generations of Adam, who have possessed it; yet will not so destroy the earth itself but that it shall survive its fiery trial, and, as I apprehend, become the everlasting abode of righteousness; a part of the holy empire of God. Nor is it, perhaps, improbable, that it may ever continue the resort, if not the frequent abode of those who are redeemed from it. An attachment to place we know is at present deeply implanted in our nature. The inhabitants of the most inhospitable regions generally love their native country, and would not change it for any other. Certain particular places, where some of the most interesting events have been transacted, when visited at some distance of time, become a considerable source of delight. Such was Bethel to Jacob, and Tabor, no doubt, to the three disciples. And why may not a view of Bethlehem, of Gethsemane, of Calvary, and of a thousand other places where God has appeared for us, afford a source of everlasting enjoyment?

However this may be, the Scriptures give us to understand, that though *the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up*; yet, *according to promise*, we are to *look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.** By the *new heavens* here is plainly to be understood so much of the elements as shall have been affected by the general conflagration; and by the *new earth*, the earth after it is purified by it.

Much to the same purpose is the account given towards the close of the Revelation of John. After a description of the general judgment, it follows, *And I saw a new heaven, and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. And I John saw the*

* 2 Pet. iii. 12, 13.

Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. When the earth shall have become a part of God's holy empire, heaven itself may then be said to be come down upon it; seeing all that is now ascribed to the one, will be true of the other. *Behold the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will dwell with them; and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and shall be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things shall be passed away. And he that sat upon the throne, said, Behold I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.**

If the great end of Redemption be the re-union of this world to the holy empire of God; and if such re-union be accompanied with a mutual augmentation of blessedness, then the importance of the one must bear some proportion to the magnitude of the other. Upon any system of philosophy, Redemption is great; but upon that which so amazingly magnifies intelligent creation, it must be great beyond expression.

VI. *The Scriptures represent the punishment of the finally impenitent as appointed for an example to the rest of the creation.*

Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them, in giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth FOR AN EXAMPLE, *suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. And her smoke* (the smoke of Babylon) *rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.*†

The miseries of the damned are never represented as inflicted upon them from such a kind of wrath or vengeance as bears no relation to the general good. *God is love;* and in none of his proceedings does he

* Rev. xxi. 1—5. † Jude 7. Rev. xix. 3, 4.

violate this principle, or lose sight of the well-being of creation in general. The manifestation of his glory is not only inseparably connected with this object, but consists in accomplishing it.

It is necessary for the general good that God's abhorrence of moral evil should be marked by some strong and durable expression of it; so that no one subject of his empire can overlook it. Such an expression was the death of Christ, his only begotten Son: and this availeth on behalf of all who acquiesce in his salvation: but all who do not, or who possess not such a temper of heart as would acquiesce in it if it were presented to them, must themselves be made sacrifices to his justice; and so like enemies and traitors to a human government, must be made to answer such an end by their death as shall counteract the ill example afforded by their life. What is said of the barren vine is applicable to the finally impenitent: *It is not fit for any work—it is good for nothing but to be burned!** The only way in which they promote the general good is by their overthrow: like the censers of Korah and his company, which were made into *broad plates for a covering to the altar; that they might be a sign to the children of Israel* in future generations;† or like Lot's wife, who was converted into a *pillar of salt*, or a lasting monument of divine displeasure!

If the grand end of future punishment be *example*, this must suppose the existence of an intelligent creation, who shall profit by it; and it should seem of a creation of magnitude; as it accords with the conduct of neither God nor man to punish a great number for an example to a few.

This truth affords a satisfactory idea of the divine government, whether there be a multiplicity of inhabited worlds or not; but if there be, it is still more satisfactory; as on this supposition the number of those who shall be finally lost may bear far less proportion

* Ezek. xv. 2—5. † Numb. xvi. 38.

to the whole of the intelligent creation, than a single execution to the inhabitants of a great empire. It is true, the loss to those who are lost, will be nothing abated by this consideration; perhaps, on the contrary, it may be augmented; and to them the divine government will ever appear gloomy: but to those who judge of things impartially, and upon an extensive scale, it will appear to contain no more of a disparagement to the government of the universe, than the execution of a murderer, once in a hundred years, would be to the government of a nation.

And now, I appeal to the intelligent, the serious and the candid reader, whether there be any truth in what Mr. Paine asserts, that to admit "that God created a "plurality of worlds, at least as numerous as what we "call stars, renders the Christian system of faith at "once little and ridiculous, and scatters it in the mind "like feathers in the air." On the contrary, it might be proved that every system of philosophy is little in comparison of Christianity. Philosophy may expand our ideas of creation; but it neither inspires a love to the *moral* character of the Creator, nor a well-grounded hope of eternal life. Philosophy, at most, can only place us upon the top of Pisgah: there, like Moses, we must die. It gives no possession of the good land: it is the province of Christianity to add, ALL IS YOUR'S! When you have ascended to the height of human discovery, there are things, and things of infinite moment too, that are utterly beyond its reach. Revelation is the medium, and the only medium, by which, standing, as it were, "on nature's Alps," we discover things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and of which it hath never entered into the heart of man to conceive.

CONCLUDING ADDRESSES,

TO

Deists, Jews, and Christians.

WHETHER the writer of these sheets can justly hope that what he advances will attract the attention of unbelievers, he does not pretend to say. If, however, it should fall into the hands of individuals among st them, he earnestly entreats that, for their own sakes, they would attend to what follows, with seriousness.

TO DEISTS.

Fellow-Men,

IT is hoped that nothing in the preceding pages can be fairly construed into a want of good will towards any of you. If I know my heart, it is not you, but your mischievous principles that are the objects of my dislike.

In the former part of this performance I have endeavoured to prove, that the system which you embrace, overlooks the moral character of God, refuses to worship him, affords no standard of right and wrong, undermines the most efficacious motives to virtuous action, actually produces a torrent of vice, and leaves mankind under all their miseries, to perish without hope; in fine, that it is an immoral system, pregnant with destruction to the human race. Unless you be able to overturn what is there advanced, or, at least, be conscious that it is not true with regard to yourselves,

you have reaſon to be ſeriouſly alarmed. To embrace a ſyſtem of immorality is the ſame thing as to be enemies to all righteouſneſs; neither to fear God, nor regard man; and what good fruit you can expect to reap from it, in this world or another, it is difficult to conceive. But, alas, inſtead of being alarmed at the immorality of your principles, is there no reaſon to ſuſpect that it is on this very account you cheriſh them? You can occaſionally praiſe the morality of Jeſus Chriſt: but are you ſincere? Why then do you not walk by it? However you may magnify other difficulties, which you have induſtriouſly laboured to diſcover in the Bible, your actions declare that it is the holineſs of its doctrines and precepts, that more than any thing elſe offends you. The manifeſt object at which you aim, both for yourſelves and the world, is an exemption from its reſtraints. Your general conduct, if put into words, amounts to this—*Come let us break his bands, and caſt away his cords from us.*

Circumſtances, of late years, have much favoured your deſign. Your party has gained the aſcendancy in a great nation, and has been conſequently increaſing in other nations. Hence it is, perhaps, that your ſpirits are raiſed, and that a higher tone is aſſumed in your ſpeeches and writings than has been uſual on former occaſions. You are *great*, you are *enlightened*; yes, you have found out the ſecret, and have only to rid the world of Chriſtianity in order to render it happy. But be not too confident. You are not the firſt who have ſet themſelves againſt the Lord, and againſt his anointed. You have overthrown ſuperſtition; but vaunt not againſt Chriſtianity. Of a truth you have deſtroyed the gods of Rome, for they were no gods; but let this ſuffice you. It is hard to kick againſt the pricks.

Whatever ſucceſs may attend your cauſe, if it be an immoral one, and eſpouſed *on that very account*, it cannot poſſibly ſtand. It muſt fall, and you muſt expect to be buried in its ruins. It may be thought

ſufficient for me to reaſon on the ſyſtem itſelf, without deſcending to the *motives* of thoſe who imbibe it; but where motives are manifeſted by actions, they become objects of human cognizance. Nor is there any hope of your unbelief being removed, but by ſomething that ſhall reach the *cauſe* of it. My deſire is neither to inſult nor flatter, but ſeriouſly to expoſtulate with you; if God peradventure may give you repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth. Three things, in particular, I would earneſtly recommend to your ſerious conſideration.

How it was that you firſt imbibed your preſent principles: How it is that almoſt all your writers, at one time or other, bear teſtimony in favour of Chriſtianity; and How it comes to paſs that your principles fail you, as they are frequently known to do, in a dying hour.

Firſt—How WAS IT THAT YOU FIRST RENOUNCED CHRISTIANITY, AND IMBIBED YOUR PRESENT PRINCIPLES? Retrace the proceſs of your minds, and aſk your conſciences as you proceed, whether all was fair and upright. Nothing is more common than for perſons of relaxed morals to attribute their change of conduct to a change of ſentiments, or views relative to thoſe ſubjects. It is galling to one's own feelings, and mean in the account of others, to *act againſt principle:* but if a perſon can once perſuade himſelf to think favourably of thoſe things which he has formerly accounted ſinful, and can furniſh a plea for them, which, at leaſt, may ſerve to parry the cenſures of mankind, he will feel much more at eaſe, and be able to put on a better face when he mingles in ſociety. Whatever inward ſtings may annoy his peace under certain occaſional qualms, yet he has not to reproach himſelf, nor can others reproach him with that inconſiſtency of character as in former inſtances. Rouſſeau confeſſes he found in the reaſonings of a certain lady, with whom he lived in the greateſt poſſible familiarity, all thoſe ideas *which he had occaſion for*—: Have you not found the ſame in the converſation and writings of deiſts?

Did you not, previous, to your rejection of Chriſtianity, indulge in vicious courſes; and, while indulging in theſe courſes, did not its holy precepts, and awful threatenings gall your ſpirits? Were you not like perſons gathering forbidden fruit amidſt ſhowers of arrows; and had you not recourſe to your preſent principles for a ſhield againſt them? If you cannot honeſtly anſwer theſe queſtions in the negative, you are in an evil caſe. You may flatter yourſelves for a while that perhaps there may be no hereafter, or at leaſt no judgment to come; but you know the time is not far diſtant when you muſt go and ſee; and then, if you ſhould be miſtaken, What will you do?

Many of you have deſcended from godly parents, and have had a religious education. Has not your infidelity ariſen from the diſlike which you conceived in early life to religious exerciſes? Family worſhip was a wearineſs to you; and the cautions, warnings, and counſels which were given you, inſtead of having any proper effect, only irritated your corruptions. You longed to be from under the yoke. Since that time, your parents, it may be, have been removed by death; or if they live, they may have loſt their controul over you. So, now you are free. But ſtill ſomething is wanting to eraſe the *prejudices* of education, which, in ſpite of all your efforts, will accompany you, and embitter your preſent purſuits. For this purpoſe a friend puts into your hands *The Age of Reaſon*, or ſome production of the kind. You read it with avidity. This is the very thing you wanted. You have long ſuſpected the truth of Chriſtianity; but had not courage to oppoſe it. Now then you are a philoſopher; yes, a philoſopher!—'Our fathers,' ſay you, 'might be well-'meaning people, but they were impoſed upon by 'prieſts. The world gets more *enlightened* now-a-'days. There is no need of ſuch rigidneſs. The 'Supreme Being (if there be one) can never have cre-'ated the pleaſures of life, but for the purpoſe of en-'joyment. Avaunt, ye ſelf-denying caſuiſts! Nature 'is the law of man!'

Was not this, or ſomething nearly reſembling it, the proceſs of your minds? And are you now ſatisfied? I do not aſk whether you have been able to defend your cauſe againſt aſſailants, nor whether you have gained converts to your way of thinking: you may have done both; but are you ſatisfied with yourſelves? Do you really believe yourſelves to be in the right way? Have you no miſgivings of heart? Is there not ſomething within you, which occaſionally whiſpers, 'My parents were righteous, and I am wicked: O 'that my ſoul were in their ſouls' ſtead!'

Ah, young men! If ſuch be the occaſional revoltings of your mind, what are you doing in labouring to gain others over to your way of thinking? Can you, from experience, honeſtly promiſe them peace of mind? Can you go about to perſuade them that there is no hell, when, if you would ſpeak the truth, you muſt acknowledge that you have already an earneſt of it kinkled in your boſoms? If counſels were not loſt upon you, I would entreat you to be contented with deſtroying your own ſouls. Have pity on your fellow-creatures, if you have none upon yourſelves? Nay, ſpare yourſelves ſo much, at leaſt, as not to incur the everlaſting execrations of your moſt intimate acquaintance. If Chriſtianity ſhould prove, what your conſciences, in your moſt ſerious moments, tell you it is, you are doing this, every day of your lives.

Secondly—Conſider HOW IT IS THAT ALMOST ALL YOUR WRITERS, AT ONE TIME OR OTHER, BEAR TESTIMONY IN FAVOUR OF CHRISTIANITY. It were eaſy to collect, from thoſe very writings which were deſigned to undermine the Chriſtian religion, hundreds of teſtimonies in its favour. Voltaire and Rouſſeau, as we have ſeen already,* have, in their fits, gone far towards contradicting all which they have written againſt it. Bolingbroke has done the ſame. Such ſentences as the following may be found in his publications: "Suppoſing Chriſtianity to have been a human in-

* Part II. Chap. III. p. 132, 133.

" vention, it has been the moſt amiable invention " that was ever impoſed on mankind for their good.— " Chriſtianity, as it came out of the hand of God, if I " may uſe the expreſſion, was a moſt ſimple and intelli- " gible rule of belief, worſhip, and manners, which is " the true notion of a religion. The goſpel is, in all " caſes, one continued leſſon of the ſtricteſt morality, " of juſtice, of benevolence, and of univerſal charity."* Paine, perhaps, has ſaid as little in this way as any of your writers, yet he has profeſſed a reſpect for the character of Jeſus Chriſt. " He was," ſays he, " a " virtuous and an amiable man. The morality that " he preached and practiſed was of the moſt benevo- " lent kind."†

In what manner will you go about to account for theſe conceſſions? Chriſtian writers, thoſe at leaſt who are ſincerely attached to the cauſe, are not ſeized with theſe fits of inconſiſtency. How is it that yours, like the worſhippers of Baal, ſhould thus be continually cutting themſelves with knives?—You muſt either give up your leaders as a ſet of men, who, while they were labouring to perſuade the world of the hypocriſy of prieſts, were themſelves the moſt infamous of all hypocrites; or, which will be equally fatal to your cauſe, you muſt attribute it to occaſional convictions, which they felt and expreſſed, though contrary to the general ſtrain of their writings. Is it not an unfavourable character of your cauſe, that, in this particular, it exactly reſembles that of vice itſelf? Vicious men will often bear teſtimony in favour of virtue, eſpecially on the near approach of death; but virtuous men never return the compliment by bearing teſtimony in favour of vice. We are not afraid of Chriſtians thus betraying their cauſe; but neither your writers, nor your conſciences, are to be truſted in a ſerious hour.

Thirdly—Conſider HOW IT COMES TO PASS THAT YOUR PRINCIPLES FAIL YOU, AS THEY ARE FREQUENT-

* Works, Vol. IV. p. 394, 395. Vol. V. p. 188, 189.

† Age of Reaſon, Part I. p. 5.

LY KNOWN TO DO, IN A DYING HOUR?—It is a rule with wiſe men, *ſo to live as they ſhall wiſh they had, when they come to die.* How do you ſuppoſe you ſhall wiſh you had lived in that day?—Look at the deaths of your greateſt men, and ſee what their principles have done for them at laſt. Mark the end of that apoſtle and high prieſt of your profeſſion, Voltaire; and try if you can find in it either integrity, or hope, or any thing that ſhould render it an object of envy.* Why is it that ſo many of you faint in the day of trial? If your cauſe were good, you would defend it with uprightneſs, and die with inward ſatisfaction. But is it ſo? Mr. Paine flatters himſelf that his principles will bear him up in the proſpect of death;† and it is poſſible that he may brave it out in ſome ſuch manner as David Hume did. Such inſtances, however, are rare. For one unbeliever that maintains his courage, many might be produced whoſe hearts have failed them, and who have trembled for the conſequences of their infidelity.

On the other hand, you cannot produce a ſingle inſtance of a Chriſtian, WHO, AT THE APPROACH OF DEATH, WAS TROUBLED, OR TERRIFIED IN HIS CONSCIENCE FOR HAVING BEEN A CHRISTIAN. Many have

* The following particulars, among many others, are recorded of this writer by his Biographer Condorcet, a man after his own heart. Firſt—That he conceived the deſign of overturning the Chriſtian religion; and that by his own hand. "I am wearied," ſaid he, "of hearing it repeated that twelve men were ſufficient to "eſtabliſh Chriſtianity; and I wiſh to prove there needs but one to "deſtroy it." Secondly—That in purſuit of this object he was threatened with a perſecution, to avoid which, he received the ſacrament, and publickly declared his reſpect for the church, and his diſdain of his detractors, namely, thoſe who had called in queſtion his Chriſtianity! Thirdly—That in his laſt illneſs, in Paris, being deſirous of obtaining what is called Chriſtian burial, he ſent for a prieſt, to whom he declared, that he "died in the Catholic faith, in "which he was born." Fourthly—That another prieſt (curate of the pariſh) troubled him with queſtions. Among other things he aſked, "Do you believe the divinity of Jeſus Chriſt?"—"In the "name of God, Sir," replied Voltaire, "ſpeak to me no more of "that man, but let me die in peace."

† Age of Reaſon, Part II. Pref.

been afraid, in that day, leſt their faith in Chriſt ſhould not prove genuine; but who that has put his truſt in him, was ever known to be apprehenſive leſt he ſhould at laſt deceive him? Can you account for this difference? If you have diſcovered the true religion, and ours be all fable and impoſture, how comes it to paſs that the iſſue of things is what it is? Do gold, and ſilver, and precious ſtones periſh in the fire; and do wood, and hay, and ſtubble endure it?

I have admitted that Mr. Paine may poſſibly brave it out till the laſt; but if he does, his courage *may be* merely aſſumed. Pride will induce men to diſguiſe the genuine feelings of their hearts, on more occaſions than one. We hear much of courage among duelliſts; but little credit is due to what they ſay, if, while the words proceed from their lips, we ſee them approach each other with paleneſs and trembling. Yea more, if Mr. Paine's courage in death be not different from what it already is in the proſpect of it, it *certainly will be* merely aſſumed. He has given full proof of what his courage amounts to in what he has advanced on the certainty of a future ſtate. He acknowledges the poſſibility of a future judgment: yea, he admits it to be rational to believe that there will be one. "The "power," he ſays, "that called us into being, can, if "he pleaſe, and when he pleaſes, call us to account "for the manner in which we have lived here; and, "therefore, without ſeeking any further motive for "the belief, it is rational to believe that he will, for "we know beforehand that he can."* I ſhall not ſtop to inquire into the juſtneſs of Mr. Paine's reaſoning from what God can do to what he will do: it is ſufficient for me that he admits it to be "rational to "believe that God will call men to account for the "manner in which they have lived here." And can he admit this truth, and not tremble? Mark his firmneſs. After acknowledging that a future judgment is the object of rational *belief*, he retracts what he has ſaid

* Age of Reaſon, Part II. p. 100.

by reducing it to only a *probability*, which is to have the influence of belief:—Yea, as if that were too terrible an idea, he brings it down to a mere *poſſibility*. The reaſon which he gives for theſe reductions is, that "If "we knew it as a fact, we ſhould be the mere *ſlaves* "*of terror*." Indeed? But wherefore? Chriſtians believe in a judgment to come, and they are not the ſlaves of terror. They have an *Advocate* as well as a Judge, by believing in whom the terror of judgment is removed. And though Mr. Paine rejects this ground of conſolation, yet if things be as he has repreſented them, I do not perceive why he ſhould be terrified. He writes as though he ſtood on a very reſpectable footing with his Creator; he is not "an outcaſt, a "beggar, or a worm;" he needs no Mediator: no indeed! He "ſtands in the ſame relative condition with "his Maker he ever did ſtand ſince man exiſted."* Very well; of what then is he afraid?—"God is "good, and will exceed the very beſt of us in good-"neſs." On this ground Lord Shafteſbury aſſures us, "Deiſts can have no dread or ſuſpicion to render "them uneaſy: for it is malice only, and not good-"neſs, which can make them afraid."† Very well, I ſay again, of what then is Mr. Paine afraid? If a Being full of goodneſs will not hurt him, he will not be hurt. Why ſhould he be terrified at a *certain* hereafter? Why not meet his Creator with cheerfulneſs, and confidence? Inſtead of this, he knows of no method by which he may be exempted from *terror*, but that of reducing future judgment to a mere *poſſibility*; leaving room for ſome faint hope, at leaſt, that what he profeſſes to believe as true, may in the end prove falſe. Such is the courage of your bluſtering hero. Unhappy man! Unhappy people! Your principles will not ſupport you in death, nor ſo much as in the contemplation of a hereafter.

* Age of Reaſon, Part I. p. 21.

† Characteriſtics, Vol. I. § 5.

Let Mr. Paine's hypotheſis be admitted, and that in its loweſt form, that there is only a *poſſibility* of a judgment to come, this is ſufficient to evince your folly, and if you thought on the ſubject, to deſtroy your peace. This alone has induced many of you, in your laſt moments, to wiſh that you had lived like Chriſtians. If it be poſſible that there may be a judgment to come, why ſhould it not be equally poſſible that Chriſtianity itſelf may be true? And if it ſhould, on what ground do you ſtand? If it be otherwiſe, Chriſtians have nothing to fear. While they are taught to deny ungodlineſs, and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world, whatever may prove true with reſpect to another, it is preſumed they are ſafe: but if that Saviour whom you have deſpiſed ſhould be indeed the Son of God; if that name which you have blaſphemed ſhould be the only one given under heaven, and among men, by which you can be ſaved; what a ſituation muſt you be in! You may wiſh at preſent not to be told of him; yea, even in death, it may be a vexation, as it was to Voltaire, to hear of him; but hear of him you muſt, and what is more, you muſt appear before him.

I cannot conclude this addreſs without expreſſing my earneſt deſire for your ſalvation; and whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, reminding you that our Redeemer is merciful. He can have compaſſion on the ignorant, and them who are out of the way. The door of mercy is not yet ſhut. At preſent you are invited, and even entreated to enter in. But if you ſtill continue hardened againſt him, you may find, to your coſt, that the abuſe of mercy gives an edge to juſtice; and that to be cruſhed to atoms by falling rocks, or buried in oblivion at the bottom of mountains, were rather to be choſen than an expoſure to the wrath of the Lamb.

TO THE JEWS.

Beloved for the fathers' sakes!

HE whom you have long rejected, looked upon Jerusalem, and wept over it. With tears he pronounced upon that once famous city, a doom, which, according to your own writer, Josephus, was soon after accomplished. In imitation of our Lord and Saviour we also could weep over your present situation. There are thousands in Britain, as well as in other nations, whose daily prayer is, that you may be saved. Hear me patiently, and candidly. Your present and everlasting good is the object of my desire.

It is not my design in this brief address to go over the various topics in dispute between us. Many have engaged in this work, and, I hope, to some good purpose. The late addresses to you, both from the pulpit and the press, as they were dictated by pure benevolence, certainly deserve, and, I trust, have gained, in some degree, your candid attention. All that I shall say will be comprised in a few suggestions, which I suppose to arise from the subject of the preceding pages.

You have long sojourned among men who have been called Christians. You have seen much evil in them; and they have seen much in you. The history of your own nation, and that of every other, confirms one of the leading doctrines of both your and our Scriptures, *the depravity of human nature*. But in your commerce with mankind, you must have had opportunity of distinguishing between nominal and serious Christians. Great numbers in your nation, even in its best days, were wicked men; and great numbers in every nation, at present, are the same. But can you not perceive a people scattered through various denominations of Christians, who fear God, and regard man; who, instead of treating you with a haughty contempt, as be-

ing ſtrangers ſcattered among the nations, diſcover a tender regard towards you on that very account; who, while they are grieved for the hardneſs of your hearts, and hurt at your ſcornful rejection of HIM whom their ſoul loveth, are nevertheleſs ardently deſirous of your ſalvation? Are you not acquainted with Chriſtians whoſe utmoſt revenge, if they could have their will of you, for all your hard ſpeeches, would be to be inſtrumental in turning you from what they believe to be the power of Satan unto God?

Let me farther appeal to you, Whether Chriſtians of this deſcription be not the true children of Abraham, the true ſucceſſors of your patriarchs and prophets, rather than thoſe of an oppoſite ſpirit, though literally deſcended from their loins. You muſt be aware, that, even in the times of David, a genuine Iſraelite was *a man of a pure heart;* and in the times of the prophets, apoſtate Iſraelites were accounted as Ethiopians.* Your anceſtors were men of whom the world was not worthy: but where will you now look for ſuch characters among you as Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob; as Samuel, David, Hezekiah, and Joſiah; as Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and many others? While you garniſh their ſepulchres, have you not manifeſtly loſt their ſpirit? This is a fact that ought to alarm you, and lead you ſeriouſly to examine whether you have not forſaken their faith. There is one thing which has particularly ſtruck my mind, and which I would earneſtly recommend to your conſideration, namely, *the temper of modern infidels towards your fathers, towards you, and towards us.*

You need not be told that deiſtical writers invariably treat your fathers with ſcorn and diſlike. Juſt as Appion, and other Greek writers, poured contempt upon your nation; juſt as the more ancient Moabites reproached, and *proudly magnified themſelves againſt the people of the Lord of Hoſts;*† ſo do all our modern in-

* Pſal. lxxiii. 1. Amos ix. 7. † Zeph. ii. 10.

ſidels. But from the time that your fathers rejected HIM in whom we believe as the Lord Meſſiah, though you have been expoſed to the chaſtiſements of heaven, and to much injurious treatment from pretended Chriſtians; yet deiſts, the common enemies of revelation, have been, comparatively ſpeaking, reconciled to you. So, however, it appears to me. I do not recollect to have met with a ſingle reflection upon you in any of their writings. On the contrary, they ſeem to feel themſelves near akin to you. Your enmity to Jeſus ſeems to be the price of their forgiveneſs: like Herod and Pontius Pilate, you became friends in the day of his crucifixion. Mr. Paine, though his writings abound in ſneers againſt your nation, *prior* to its rejection of Chriſt, yet appears to be well reconciled to *you*, and willing to admit your lame account of the body of Jeſus being ſtolen away.* Ought you not to be alarmed at theſe things? Seriouſly examine whether you have not forſaken the God of your fathers, and become the friends and allies of them who hate both HIM and them.

The hatred of infidels has long been transferred from you to us. Whether, in the language of the New Teſtament, we be the true *children of Abraham* or not, we inherit that reproach and diſlike from unbelievers which was heretofore the portion of the godly Iſraelites. On what account were your fathers hated by the practical atheiſts of their day? Was it not becauſe of their *devotedneſs to God?* It was this in David that provoked the reſentment of the children of Belial, and rendered them his determined enemies. They were continually jeering at his *prayers*, his *tears*, and his *truſt* in Jehovah; turning that which, in reality, was his *glory into ſhame;* and afflicting him in his affliction, by ſcornfully inquiring, *Where is thy God?*† Such is the treatment which the *godly* part of your na-

* Age of Reaſon, Part I. p. 6, 7.

† Pſal. xxii. 8. iv. 2. xlii. 3. xxxi. 18. xl. 15.

tion received in all ages, both from heathens abroad, and impious characters at home;* and ſuch is the treatment which ſerious Chriſtians continue to receive from ungodly men to this day: but are you hated and reproached *on this account?*

Of late years it has been frequently pleaded, that the principal objections to your embracing the Chriſtian religion are found in the doctrines of the Trinity, the deity of Chriſt, and atonement by his death; doctrines which the greater part of Chriſtians hold to be taught in the New Teſtament. But thoſe who impute your conduct to theſe cauſes, muſt have nearly as mean an opinion of your rationality as they have of ours; with whom they ſay, "there is no reaſoning; and that "we are to be pitied, and conſidered as under debility "of mind in one reſpect, however ſenſible and ration-"al in others."† What have the principles, which, in our judgment, are taught in the New Teſtament, to do with your acknowledging Jeſus to be the Meſſiah, and the Chriſtian religion to be of God? Let theſe poſitions be admitted, and examine the New Teſtament for yourſelves. If you were not conſidered as poſſeſſing a ſufficient degree of good ſenſe to diſtinguiſh between Chriſtianity and the creed of any particular party of Chriſtians, it is ſurpriſing that *rational Chriſtians* ſhould think of writing addreſſes to you. For our parts we could almoſt be ſatisfied that you ſhould decide the controverſy, whether the doctrines before mentioned be taught in the New Teſtament, or not? As to removing theſe ſtumbling-blocks, as ſome call them, out of your way, we have no inclination to attempt it. Only imbibe the ſpirit of your anceſtors, and they will preſently ceaſe to be ſtumbling-blocks. Believe Moſes, and you will believe Jeſus; and believing Jeſus, neither his claiming to be the *Son of God*, and conſequently *equal with God*, nor his inſiſting upon

* Pſal. lxxix. 10. cxv. 2. Joel ii. 17. Mic. vii. 8, 9, 10. Iſai. lxvi. 5.

† Lindſey's Catechiſts, Inquiry 6.

his *fleſh being the life of the world*, will offend you. On the contrary, whenever the ſpirit of grace, and of ſupplications, is poured out upon you, and you come to look on HIM whom you have pierced, and mourn, you will join in the worſhip of him; and the doctrine of atonement, by his death, will be to you a fountain ſet open for ſin and uncleanneſs.*

You live in expectation of being reſtored to your own land. We expect the ſame thing, and rejoice in the belief of it. The Old and the New Teſtaments agree in predicting it.† But the ſame prophets that have foretold your return to Canaan, have alſo foretold that you muſt be brought to *repent of your ſins, and to ſeek Jehovah your God, and David your king.*‡ Your holy land will avail you but little, unleſs you be a holy people.

Finally—You admit, I ſuppoſe, that though we ſhould err in believing Jeſus to be the Meſſiah; yet while we deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world, it is an error that may not affect our eternal ſalvation: but if the error be on your ſide, on what ground do you ſtand? Your fathers, in this caſe, were murderers of the Prince of Life; and by adopting their principles, you make the deed your own. His blood lies upon you, and upon your children. The terrible deſtruction of your city by the Romans, and the hardneſs of heart to which you have been given up, are ſymptoms of that wrath which is come upon you to the uttermoſt. Repent and believe the goſpel, that you may eſcape the wrath to come!

* Zech. xii. 10—14. xiii. 1.

† Ezek. xxxvii. Luke xxi. 24. ‡ Hoſ. iii. 5.

TO CHRISTIANS.

Beloved Brethren!

IT is witneſſed of David that he *ſerved the will of God in his generation.* Every generation has its peculiar work. The preſent age is diſtinguiſhed, you know, by the progreſs of infidelity. We have long been exempted from perſecution; and he whoſe fan is in his hand, perceiving his floor to ſtand in need of purging, ſeems determined, by new trials, to purge it. The preſent is a winnowing time. If we wiſh to ſerve the will of God in it, we muſt carefully attend to thoſe duties which ſuch a ſtate of things impoſes upon us.

In the firſt place, Let us *look well to the ſincerity of our hearts; and ſee to it that our Chriſtianity is vital, practical, and decided.* An army called to engage after a long peace, requires to be examined, and every one ſhould examine himſelf. Many become ſoldiers when danger is at a diſtance. The mighty hoſt of Midianites were overcome by a ſelected band. A proclamation was iſſued through the army of Iſrael, "Whoſoever is fearful and afraid, let him return:" and after a great dimunition from cowardice, the reſt muſt be brought down to the water, to be tried. Such, or nearly ſuch, may be the trials of the Church; thoſe who overcome may be reduced to a ſmall company in compariſon of thoſe who have borne the Chriſtian name. So indeed the Scriptures inform us: They that obtain the victory with Chriſt are *called, and choſen, and faithful.**

The manner in which things, of late ages, have moved on in the religious world has been ſuch as to admit of a large outer-court, if I may ſo ſpeak, for a ſort of half-worſhippers. A general religious reputation has been hitherto obtained at a ſmall expenſe.

* Rev. xvii. 14.

But ſhould infidelity prevail throughout Chriſtendom, as it has in France, the nominal extent of the Chriſtian Church will be greatly reduced. In taking its dimenſions, the outer-court will, as it were, be left out, and given to the Gentiles. In this caſe you muſt come in, or keep out; be one thing, or another; a decided friend of Chriſt, or an avowed infidel. It is poſſible that the time may come, when all parties will be reduced, in effect, to two, *believers* and *unbelievers*.

"Never," ſays a late maſterly and moving writer, "were times more eventful and critical," than at preſent; "never were appearances more ſingular and "intereſting, in the political, or in the religious world. "You behold, on the one hand, infidelity, with dread"ful irruption, extending its ravages far and wide; "and on the other, an amazing acceſſion of zeal and "activity to the cauſe of Chriſtianity. Error, in all "its forms, is aſſiduouſly and ſucceſsfully propagated; "but the progreſs of evangelical truth is alſo great. "The number of the apparently neutral party daily "diminiſhes; and men are now either becoming wor"ſhippers of the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus "Chriſt, or receding faſt through the miſts of ſcepti"ciſm into the dreary regions of ſpeculative and prac"tical atheiſm. It ſeems as if Chriſtianity and infi"delity were muſtering each the hoſt of the battle, "and preparing for ſome great day of God. The "enemy is come in like a flood: but the Spirit of the "Lord hath lifted up a ſtandard againſt him. Who, "then is on the Lord's ſide? Who?—Let him come "forth to the help of the Lord, to the help of the "Lord againſt the mighty!"*

Secondly—*Let a good underſtanding be cultivated among ſincere Chriſtians of different denominations.* Let the friends of Chriſt know one another; and let not ſlighter ſhades of difference keep them at variance. The enemies of Chriſtianity know how to avail them-

* Ferrier's Two Diſcourſes at Paiſley, in June, 1798.

ſelves of our diſcords. The union which is here recommended, however, is not a merely nominal one, much leſs one that requires a ſacrifice of principle. Let us unite ſo far as we can act in concert, in promoting the intereſt of Chriſt; and hold ourſelves open to conviction with regard to other things. Let not the free diſcuſſion of our differences be laid aſide, or any ſuch connexion formed as ſhall require it: only let them be conducted with modeſty, frankneſs, and candour, and the godly will find their account in them. Let it be the great concern of all, not ſo much to maintain their own peculiarities, as to know and practiſe the truth: not ſo much to yield, and come nearer to other denominations, as to approximate towards the mind of Chriſt. *The mind of Chriſt*, as expreſſed in his doctrines and precepts, muſt be the central point in which we meet: as we approach this, we ſhall come nearer to each other. So much agreement as there is amongſt us, ſo much is there of union; and ſo much agreement as there is in the mind of Chriſt, ſo much of Chriſtian union.

Finally—*Let not the heart of any man fail him, on account of the high tone and ſcornful airs aſſumed by infidels.* The reign of infidelity may be extenſive, but it muſt be ſhort. It carries in it the ſeeds of its own diſſolution. Its immoralities are ſuch, that the world cannot long ſuſtain them. Scripture prophecy has clearly foretold all the great governments of the world, from the time of the Jewiſh Captivity to this day: the Babylonian, Perſian, Macedonian, and Roman; together with the ten kingdoms into which the laſt of theſe empires has been divided, and the Papal government which ſprang up from amongſt them; but it makes no explicit mention of this. It has no individual ſubſiſtence given it in the ſyſtem of prophecy. It is not a *beaſt*; but a mere putrid excreſcence of the Papal beaſt; an excreſcence which, though it may diffuſe death through every vein of the body on which it grew, yet ſhall die along with it. *The*

beaſt, and all which pertains to him *goeth into perdition.** There is no ſpace of time allowed for this government: no ſooner it is ſaid, *Babylon is fallen*, than voices are heard in heaven declaring that *the marriage of the Lamb is come.*† No ſooner does *the judgment ſit, to take away the dominion of the little horn, to conſume and to deſtroy it unto the end*, than it follows, *And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatneſs of the kingdom under the whole heaven ſhall be given to the people of the ſaints of the Moſt High.*‡

Popery is not yet deſtroyed though it has received a deadly blow; and from what is ſaid of the little horn, that they ſhall take away his dominion *to conſume, and to deſtroy it unto the end*, it ſhould ſeem that its overthrow will be gradual. While this is accompliſhing, the reign of infidelity may continue, with various ſucceſs; but no longer. Only let us *watch, and keep our garments clean*, a caution given, it is probable, with immediate reference to the preſent times,§ and we have nothing to fear. It is a ſource of great conſolation that the laſt of the four beaſts, which, for more than two thouſand years, have perſecuted the Church, and oppreſſed mankind, is drawing near to its end. The government that ſhall next prevail will be that of Chriſt, *whoſe kingdom is an everlaſting kingdom, and all dominions ſhall ſerve and obey him. Even ſo, amen. Bleſſed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; amen, and amen!*

* Rev. xvii. 8, 11. † Rev. xviii. xix.

‡ Dan. vii. 26, 27. The writer has ſince read a very able diſcourſe by Mr. Nathan Strong, of Hartford, Connecticut, entitled, *Political Inſtruction from the Prophecies of God's Word*; in which the above ſentiments are ſtated with great force of evidence.

§ Rev. xvi. 15.

FINIS.

QUERY

TO THE AUTHOR OF

"THE GOSPEL ITS OWN WITNESS."

[From the BIBLICAL MAGAZINE.]

REV. SIR,

WITH considerable pleasure I have perused your book, "THE GOSPEL ITS OWN WITNESS." There is one thing, however, in p. 200, second edition, on which I take the liberty to request a little information; namely, Whether any person, *by nature*, possesses that "honest heart" which constitutes the ability to comply with the invitations of the gospel to everlasting life? If not, Whether, if I be not what you call an *elect sinner*, there are any means provided of God, and which I can use, that shall issue in that "honesty of heart" which will enable me to believe unto salvation? And if not, be so good as to inform me, How the gospel can, with any propriety, be called, *A blessing bestowed upon me;* seeing it is inadequate to make me happy, and contains no good thing which I can possibly obtain or enjoy: for though I am a sinner, yet it is impossible for me to be *a believing sinner*.

Yours, &c. C. G.

Portsea.

REPLY

TO THE FOREGOING QUERY.

DEAR SIR,

YOU inquire—(1.) "Whether any person, *by nature*, possesses that 'honest heart' which constitutes the ability to comply with the invitations of the gospel?" I believe the heart of man to be by nature the direct opposite of

honeſt. I am not aware, however, that I have any where repreſented an honeſt heart as conſtituting our ability to comply with goſpel invitations, unleſs as the term is ſometimes uſed in a figurative ſenſe, for moral ability. I have ſaid, "There is no ability wanting for this purpoſe "in any man who poſſeſſes an honeſt heart." If a perſon owed you one hundred pounds, and could find plenty of money for his own purpoſes, though none for you; and ſhould he, at the ſame time, plead inability, you would anſwer, *There was no ability wanting but an honeſt heart:* yet it would be an unjuſt conſtruction of your words, if an advocate for this diſhoneſt man were to allege, that you had repreſented an honeſt heart as that which *conſtituted the ability to pay the debt.* No, you would reply, his ability, ſtrictly ſpeaking, conſiſts in its being *in the power of his hand*, and this he has. That which is wanting is an honeſt principle; and it is the former, not the latter, which renders him accountable. It is ſimilar with regard to God. Men have the ſame natural powers to love Chriſt as to hate him; to believe as to diſbelieve; and this it is which conſtitutes their accountableneſs. Take away reaſon and conſcience, and man would ceaſe to be accountable: but if he were as wicked as Satan himſelf, in that caſe no ſuch effect would follow.—(2.) If no man by nature poſſeſs an honeſt heart, you inquire, "Whether, "if I be not what you call an *elect ſinner*, there are any "means provided of God, and which I can uſe, that ſhall "iſſue in that 'honeſty of heart' which will enable me to "believe unto ſalvation?" Your being an elect, or a non-elect ſinner, makes no difference as to this queſtion. The idea of a perſon deſtitute of honeſty uſing means to obtain it, is in all caſes a contradiction. The uſe of means *ſuppoſes the exiſtence* of an honeſt deſire after the end; the Scriptures direct to the ſincere uſe of means for obtaining eternal life; and theſe means are, *Repent and believe the goſpel;* but they no where direct to ſuch a uſe of means as may be complied with, without any honeſty of heart, and in order to obtain it. Nothing appears to me with greater evidence, than that God *directly requires uprightneſs of heart*, not only in the moral law, but in all the exhortations of the Bible, and not the diſhoneſt uſe of means in order to obtain it. Probably, you yourſelf would not

plead for *such* a use of means; but would allow, that even in using means to obtain an honest heart, we ought to be *sincere:* but, if so, you must maintain what I affirm, that nothing short of honesty of heart *itself* is required in any of the exhortations of Scripture; for a sincere use of means *is* honesty of heart. If you say, 'No; man is depraved: it is not his duty to possess an honest heart, but merely to use means that he may possess it:' I answer, (as personating the sinner) I have no *desire* after an honest heart. If you reply, 'You should pray for such a desire,' you must mean, if you mean any thing, that I should express my *desire* to God, that I may have a *desire;* and I tell you that I have none to express! You would then, Sir, be driven to tell me, 'I was so wicked, that I neither was of an upright heart, nor would be persuaded to use any means for becoming so; and that I must take the consequences.' That is, I must be exposed to punishment; because, though I had "a price in my hand to "get wisdom, *I had no heart to it.*" Thus, all you do is to remove the obstruction farther out of sight: the thing is the same.

I apprehend it is owing to your considering human depravity as the *misfortune*, rather than the *fault* of human nature, that you and others speak of it as you do. You would not write in this manner in an affair that affected *yourself.* If the debtor above supposed, whom you knew to have plenty of wealth about him, were to allege his want of an honest heart, you might possibly think of *using means with him;* but you would not think of directing him to use means to become what at present he has no desire to be—an honest man!

(3.) You inquire, If there be no means provided of God, which I can use, that shall issue in that honesty of heart which will enable me to believe unto salvation, "How can the gospel be *a blessing bestowed upon me;* see-"ing it is inadequate to make me happy, and contains no "good thing which I can possibly obtain or enjoy?" If I be under no other inability than that which arises from a dishonesty of heart, it is an abuse of language to introduce the terms "possible, impossible," &c. for the purpose of diminishing the goodness of God, or destroying the accountableness of man. I am not wanting in power, provided I

were willing; and if I be not willing, there lies my fault. Nor is any thing in itself less a blessing on account of our unreasonable and wicked aversion to it. Indeed, the same would follow from your own principles. If I be so wicked as not only to be destitute of an honest heart, but *cannot be perjuaded to use means in order to obtain it*, I must perish: and then, according to your way of writing, the gospel was "inadequate to make me happy, and "was no blessing to me!" You will say, 'I might have used the means:' that is, I might, *if I would*, or if I had possessed a sincere desire after the end; but I *did not* possess it; and therefore the same consequences follow your hypothesis as that which you oppose.

If these things be true, say you, we may *despair*. True, Sir, and that is the point, in a sense, to which I should be glad to see you and many others brought. Till we despair of all help from ourselves, we shall never pray acceptably; nor, in my judgment, is there any hope of our salvation.

Let a man feel that there is no bar between him and heaven, except what consists in his own wickedness; and yet that such is its influence over him, that he certainly never will, by any efforts of his own, extricate himself from it, and he will then begin to pray for an interest in salvation by *mere grace*, in the name of Jesus—a salvation that shall save him *from himself;* and, so praying, he will find it; and when he has found it, he will feel and acknowledge that it was grace alone that made him to differ; and this grace, he is taught in the scriptures to ascribe to the purpose of God, given him in Christ Jesus before the world began.

Yours, &c. A. F.

Mr. FULLER's

LETTERS

TO

Mr. VIDLER,

ON

THE DOCTRINE OF

UNIVERSAL SALVATION.

BOSTON:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY MANNING AND LORING, NO. 2, CORNHILL.

AUG. 1803.

ADVERTISEMENT.

A REVIEW *of the controverſy between Mr. Vidler and Mr. Fuller, on the doctrine of* UNIVERSAL SALVATION, *in twelve Letters to a Univerſaliſt*, being prepared for the preſs, the Publiſher judged it a fit opportunity for gratifying the wiſhes of many of *Mr. Fuller's* friends, to reprint his Letters to *Mr. Vidler* on that ſubject. He accordingly applied to the Author for permiſſion to do ſo, and received the following anſwer :— "Mr. Vidler, in a Letter to me, ſignified his intention to reprint "the whole controverſy. As he has now, I ſhould think, had "ſufficient time to fulfil his propoſal, and has not done it, you "are at liberty to publiſh that part of it which belongs to me."

The reader is requeſted to notice, that the firſt of theſe Letters appeared in the Evangelical Magazine for September, 1795, and the ſeven following ones in the Univerſaliſt's Miſcellany, between July, 1799, and July, 1800; and that owing to this circumſtance, the firſt Letter in the preſent ſeries was not numbered in that of the Univerſaliſt's Miſcellany : but what is there called the *firſt* is here the *ſecond ;* and ſo on throughout.

Thoſe paſſages which relate to the article of "Birmingham "news," are omitted, as irrelative to the point at iſſue.

The *Review* will be printed uniformly with the preſent publication, for the accommodation of the reader.

CLIFTON, *Aug.* 2, 1802.

LETTERS TO MR. VIDLER.

LETTER I.

Expoſtulations with Mr. Vidler, on his having embraced the Doctrine of Univerſal Salvation.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IT has afforded me ſome painful concern to hear of your having embraced the ſcheme of Univerſal Salvation. When you were at K———, you appeared to me to be of a ſpeculative diſpoſition. I have long thought ſuch a turn of mind to be very advantageous or very dangerous: perſons of this deſcription either make great advances in truth, or fall into great errors. I cannot, in this letter, enter deeply into the controverſy; nor is there any neceſſity for it, as I am told that Dr. Edwards's Anſwer to Dr. Chauncey is in your hands. I earneſtly wiſh you may read that piece with care, impartiality, and openneſs to conviction. I think you ought to have read it before you advanced your change of ſentiment; and I greatly wiſh you had: for though I do not queſtion your openneſs to conviction, any more than that of any other perſon in your ſituation, yet I know ſomething of what is in man: I know it is a very rare thing *when we have once openly diſavowed a ſentiment, to return to it, and openly avow it again.* There are many inſtances of people changing their principles, and there may have been inſtances of the other; but I do not recollect any. Falſe ſhame, ſupported by miſtaken pride, forms here a very powerful temptation. The dread of being accuſed of verſatility and indeciſion, inſenſibly obtains ſuch a dominion over the mind, as to blind it to one ſide of the argument, and to give efficacy to every thing that looks like an argument, or the ſhadow of an argument, on the other.

It is certainly a very ſerious matter that we do not *err* in our miniſtrations. Error in a miniſter may affect the eternal welfare of many. I hope I may preſume upon the friendlineſs of your temper while I expoſtulate with you on the ſubject. I will not be tedious to you, but let me entreat you to conſider the following things:

Firſt: Whether your change of ſentiment has not ariſen from an idea of endleſs puniſhment being in itſelf *unjuſt*. If it has, conſider *whether* this does not ariſe from diminutive notions of the evil of ſin; *whether* you be not too much infected by ſin yourſelf to be a proper judge of its demerit; (a company of criminals would be very improper judges of the equity and goodneſs of a law which condemns them;) *whether* you do not hold a principle, from which it will follow, that millions will be finally happy who will not be indebted to either the grace of God, or the death of Chriſt, for their happineſs; and conſequently muſt have a heaven to themſelves, not being able to join with thoſe who aſcribe theirs to God and the Lamb. For if endleſs miſery be *unjuſt*, exemption from it muſt be the ſinner's *right*, and can never be attributed to *mercy;* neither could a mediator be needed to induce a righteous God to liberate the ſinner, when he had ſuffered his full deſert. In fine, conſider whether you do not contradict your own experience. I think you have told me of your great diſtreſs of ſoul, ariſing from a conſciouſneſs of your deſerving to be caſt out of God's favour, and baniſhed forever from his preſence. Can you *now* ſay, that you did not deſerve this? Do you not deſerve it ſtill? If you do, why not others?

Secondly: Conſider *whether the genius of the ſentiment in queſtion, be not oppoſite to that of every other ſentiment in the bible.* The whole tenor of the Scripture *ſaith to the righteous, It ſhall be well with him; and to the wicked, It ſhall be ill with him:* But Univerſal Salvation ſaith not only to the righteous, but to the wicked, It ſhall be well at laſt with him. Do conſider whether you can find any one Scripture truth that reſembles it in this reſpect. What doctrine, beſides this, can you find in the bible, that affords encouragement to a ſinner going on ſtill in his treſpaſſes; and which furniſhes ground for hope and joy, even ſuppoſing him to perſevere in ſin till death? Inſtead of ſiding with God

against a wicked world, as a servant of God ought to do; is not this a siding wicked world against God, and encouraging them to believe, what they are apt enough to believe without encouragement, that *they shall have peace, though they add drunkenness to thirst? Wo is me*, said an apostle, *if I preach not the gospel! If an angel from heaven preach any other gospel*, he is declared to be *accursed!* Do seriously consider whether the doctrine of Universal Salvation will not render your preaching *another gospel*. The gospel of Christ is *good tidings to the meek, healing to the broken hearted*, and *comfort to them that mourn:* but must not your's be good tidings to the proud and impenitent, and comfort to those whom the Scripture declares under condemnation and the curse? The gospel of Christ is a system of holiness, a system entirely opposite to every vicious bias of the human heart; a system, therefore, which no unrenewed heart embraces—*he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God:*—But the good news which you must publish requires no change of heart, that it may be embraced; being just suited to the wishes of an abandoned mind.

Thirdly: Consider whether your ministrations, on this principle, will not savour of his who taught our first parents, *Ye shall not surely die.* If you should raise the hopes of the ungodly part of your audience, that though they should live and die in their *filthiness*, yet they shall not *be filthy still;* though they go down to the *pit*, yet it shall not prove *bottomless;* though the worm may prey upon them, yet at some period or other it *shall die;* and though they may have to encounter devouring fire, yet they shall not dwell in *everlasting* burnings: If, I say, you should raise such hopes, and if all at last should prove a deception; think how you will be able to look *them* in the face another day; and what is still more, how will you be able to look HIM in the face, who hath charged you to be *free from the blood of all men;* and to *say unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him!*

My dear friend! do not take it unkindly. My soul is grieved for you, and for the souls of many around you. How are you as to peace of mind, and communion with God? Beware of the whirlpool of Socinianism. From

what I underſtand of the nature and tendency of your principles, it appears to me you are already within the influence of its deſtructive ſtream. All who hold this ſentiment, I know, are not Socinians; but there are few, if any Socinians, who do not hold this ſentiment, which is certainly of a piece with their whole ſyſtem. It would greatly rejoice my heart to be able to acknowledge you, as heretofore, my brother and fellow-labourer in the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt. Do let me hear from you, and believe me to be,

Yours, &c.

Feb. 14, 1793. A. F.

LETTER II.

Reaſons for not continuing the controverſy, and replies to Mr. V.'s objections to the foregoing.

SIR,

IN the year 1793, when I underſtood that you had imbibed the doctrine of Univerſal Salvation, I wrote you a private expoſtulatory letter, to which you returned no anſwer. You ſpeak of this letter as being no ſecret in the circle of my acquaintance. I do not think it was ſhewn to more than two or three individuals. Some time after, as a requeſt was made in the *Evangelical Magazine* for ſome thought on that ſubject, and as there was nothing private in the contents of that letter, I took the liberty to ſend it up for inſertion. Accordingly it appeared in the Magazine for September, 1795, (p. 357) under the ſignature of GAIUS. To this letter you have ſince written an anſwer, in the two firſt numbers of your *Miſcellany*: I received from you a copy of thoſe numbers at the time, and ſince then another of a ſecond edition, for both of which I thank you. To this anſwer I made no reply. In your ſecond edition you inform your readers of the caſe, and ſeem to wiſh much to know the reaſons of my ſilence. Some of your friends in the country, poſſeſſing a little of the ſanguine temper, perhaps, of your Birmingham correſpondent, appear to have entertained a hope

that it was owing to the impreſſion which your letters had made upon my mind. If ſuch be alſo your hope, I can only ſay it has no foundation.

Whether the reaſons of my ſilence be "cogent" or not, the reader will judge when I have ſtated them. If I do not conſider them as requiring a *continued* ſilence, it is becauſe you have compelled me to purſue a different conduct. To the beſt of my recollection, I had three reaſons for not writing at that time :—

Firſt : I did not know that it would be agreeable to you to inſert in your Miſcellany, what I might write upon the ſubject ; and though I conſidered the Evangelical Magazine as a ſuitable work for the introduction of a ſingle piece, yet it did not appear to be a proper vehicle for a continued diſcuſſion, unleſs what was ſaid on both ſides were introduced.

Secondly : Though I was not very deeply impreſſed with the force of your arguments, yet being fully perſuaded, notwithſtanding what you ſay of the holy nature of your doctrine, that it needed only to be read by a certain deſcription of people in order to be imbibed ; and not ſuppoſing your work to have a very extenſive circulation at preſent, I thought it might be as well to let it alone. You may conſider this, if you pleaſe, as an acknowledgment of the weakneſs of my cauſe.

Thirdly : Your two letters appeared to me to contain ſo many miſapprehenſions, and a quantity of perverſion of the plain meaning of Scripture, that I felt it a kind of hopeleſs undertaking to go about to correct them.

I do not entertain a mean opinion of your talents ; but they are perverted by a ſyſtem. You write as though you did not underſtand the plain meaning of words. I ſhould not have thought that by ſaying "I obſerved you to be of a *ſpeculative* diſpoſition," I ſhould either have puzzled or offended you. I certainly did not mean, by that form of ſpeech, either that you diſcovered a diſpoſition "not to take the aſſertions of men as the rule of your faith," on the one hand, or any particular "want of reſpect towards the ſacred writings" on the other. I ſhould not have thought of uſing ſuch modes of expreſſion to convey either of theſe ideas. If you chooſe to pay yourſelf ſuch a compliment, or load yourſelf with

ſuch a cenſure, you are at liberty to do ſo; but do not attribute either of them to me. You might have ſuppoſed that I meant to exhibit no very heavy charge, nor indeed any charge at all, under this form of expreſſion, ſeeing I added, that "ſuch a turn of mind might be very *advantageous* as well as very dangerous."

In ſuggeſting that "it is a ſerious matter that we err not in our miniſtrations," I did not mean either to take it for granted that you were in an error, or to prove that you were ſo; but merely to beſpeak your ſerious attention to the ſubject. Your ſtumbling at the threſhold in this manner, Sir, afforded but little hope that, if I wrote, it would produce any other effect than a wrangle of words, for which I had neither time nor inclination.

The three queſtions which I put to you, and "entreated you to conſider," were, it ſeems, totally irrelative to the ſubject, equally ſo as to "the doctrine of election:" yet you thought proper to offer anſwers to ſome parts of them, as well as to paſs over others. Waving, for the preſent, the conſideration of thoſe parts which you have noticed, I ſhall remind the reader of a few things which you have *not* noticed, and leave him to judge whether even they were totally irrelative to the ſubject.

You have not told us, that I recollect, whether you claim an exemption from endleſs puniſhment *as a right;* but ſeem to wiſh us to think that this is not your ground, eſpecially as you aſcribe it to the death of Chriſt: (p. 10.) yet, in other parts of your Miſcellany, I perceive the gift of Chriſt itſelf is conſidered as a *reparation for an injury*; (p. 69.) which affords but too plain a proof that notwithſtanding all you ſay of grace and love, it is not on the footing of grace, but *debt*, that you hold with Univerſal Salvation.

Under the ſecond queſtion you were aſked, "What doctrine, *beſides* that of univerſal ſalvation, you would find in the Bible, which affords encouragement to a ſinner, going on ſtill in his treſpaſſes; and which furniſhes ground for hope and joy, even ſuppoſing him to perſevere in ſin till death?" To this you have given no anſwer. Was this queſtion equally irrelative to the ſubject as to the doctrine of election?

Under the third queſtion, you were addreſſed as follows:—"If you ſhould raiſe the hopes of the ungodly

" part of your audience, though they should live and die " in their *filthiness*, yet they shall not *be filthy still*; though " they go down to the *pit*, yet it shall not prove *bottom-* " *less*; though the worm prey upon them, yet at some " period or other it shall *die*; and though they may have " to encounter *devouring fire*, yet they shall not dwell with " *everlasting burnings*: If, I say, you should raise such " hopes, and if all at last should prove a deception, think " how you will be able to look *them* in the face another " day; and what is still more, how you will be able to " look HIM in the face who hath charged you to be *pure* " *from the blood of all men!*" Was this equally irrelative to the subject as to the doctrine of election? Yet to no part of this have you given any answer, except your attempting to explain away the term *everlasting* may be so called. You represent the whole of this third question, as proceeding on the supposition of your denying *all* future punishment. But is not this a gross misrepresentation? Does not the whole foregoing passage allow that you admit of future punishment of a limited duration; and hold up, though not in the form of arguments, several scriptural objections to that notion? I consider this, Sir, as a further proof of your talents for fair and plain reasoning, being perverted by a system.

You appeal to the *Scriptures*, and contend that they no where teach the doctrine of endless punishment; yet you are aware that they *appear* to do so, and are obliged to have recourse to a method of weakening the force of terms in order to get rid of them. It has been long the practice of writers on your side the question, to ring changes on the words *aion*, and *aionios*; pretty words no doubt, and could they be proved to be less expressive of endless duration than the English words *everlasting* and *eternal*, they might be something to the purpose: but if not, the continual recurrence to them is a mere affectation of learning, serving to mislead the ignorant. Be this as it may, this is an exercise which hardly becomes you or me. I shall only observe upon it, that by this method of proceeding, you may disprove almost any thing you please. There are scarcely any terms in any language, but what, through the poverty of language itself, or the inequality of the number of words to the number of

ideas, are *sometimes* used in an improper or figurative sense. Thus, if one attempt to prove the divinity of the Son of God, or even of the Father, from his being called *Jehovah*, *God*, &c. you may reply, that the name Jehovah is sometimes given to things ; as to an altar, a city, and once to the church ; therefore nothing can be concluded from hence in favour of the argument. Thus also, if one go about to prove the omniscience of God, from its being declared that *his understanding is infinite ;* you might answer, the term infinite is sometimes used to express only a very great degree, as when the strength of Ethiopia and Egypt is said to have been *infinite*. (Nah. iii. 9.) Again : If one endeavour to prove the endless existence of God, from his being called the *eternal* God, the *everlasting* God, &c. ; or the endless duration of the heavenly inheritance, from its being called *eternal* life, an inheritance *incorruptible* and that *fadeth not away ;* you might answer, these terms are sometimes used to signify only a limited duration ; and, that a thing in common language is said to be *incorruptible*, when it will continue a long time without signs of decay.

The question is, *Could stronger terms have been used concerning the duration of future punishment than are used ?* To object against the words *everlasting*, *eternal*, &c. as being too weak, or indeterminate in their application for the purpose, is idle, unless others could be named which are stronger, or more determinate. What expressions could have been used that would have placed the subject beyond dispute ? You ordinarily make use of the term *endless*, to express our doctrine : it should seem then, that if we read of *endless* punishment, or punishment *without end*, you would believe it. Yet the same objections might be made to this, as to the words everlasting, eternal, &c. It is common to say of a loquacious person, He is an *endless* talker : it might, therefore, be pretended that the term *endless* is very indeterminate ; that it often means no more than a long time ; and, in some instances, not more than three or four hours at longest. Thus you see, or may see, that it is not in the power of language to stand before such methods of criticising and reasoning, as those on which you build your system.

Admitting all that you allege in favour of the limited sense of the above terms, still the nature of the subject,

the connexion and scope of the passages, together with the use of various other forms of expression which convey the same thing are sufficient to prove, that when applied to the doctrine of future punishment, they are to be understood without any limitation.

If we read of a disease cleaving to a man *forever*, the plain meaning is *to the end of his life*: if of an *everlasting* priesthood, the meaning is, one that should continue *to the end of the dispensation* of which it was an institute: if of *everlasting* hills, or mountains, the meaning is, that they will continue *till the end of the world*: but if *after* this world is ended, and successive duration consequently terminated, we read that the wicked shall go away into *everlasting* punishment, and that in the same passage in which it is added, *but the righteous into everlasting life*; (Matt. xxv. 46.) wo be to the man who dares to plunge into that abyss on the presumption of finding a bottom!

The evidence which you offer of a *successive duration* after this period, is a proof of the scarcity of that article in the paths which you are in the habits of tracing. A plain unbiassed reader of Scripture would have supposed, that the terms *day and night*, in Rev. xiv. 11, had been a figurative mode of expression to denote *perpetuity*; and especially as the same language is used by the inhabitants of heaven, chap. vii. 15. For my part, I confess I should as soon have dreamed of proving from what is said in chap. xxi. 24—"The *nations* of them that are saved shall walk in the light of the New Jerusalem,"—that mankind will maintain their present political distinctions in a future state, as of founding upon such language the idea of successive duration. Your expositions on other parts of the Revelations are of the same description, as frigid as they are puerile. It is a wonder the New Jerusalem *coming down from heaven* had not been supposed to have fallen into *the sea*, and to have filled it up; and an argument been drawn from its great dimensions, of its being large enough to contain the whole human race. You must not be surprised, Sir, if I do not perceive the force of these passages in proving that all beyond the last judgment is not *proper eternity*.

Yours, &c.

July, 1799. A. F.

LETTER III.

Difficulties attending Mr. V's. Scheme, and its inconsistency with Scripture.

SIR,

YOU complain, more than once, of my not understanding the subject against which I write; and here, for aught I see, I must fall under. I confess I do not, nor can I understand what it is that you believe. Having heard and seen so much of your professing to hold the doctrine of *universal* salvation, *universal* restitution, and that "all men will be finally benefited by the death of "Christ," I really thought you had meant so; and could not have imagined that with these pretensions you would have avowed the notion of annihilation. Hence it was, that in my third question, though I did not as you allege, proceed upon the supposition of your denying *all* future punishment, yet I acknowledge I did proceed upon the supposition that you hold with no other future punishment than what should terminate in everlasting life. And who could have thought otherwise? After all the information you have since given me, I am still so ignorant as not to understand how all men are to be finally saved, and yet a part of them annihilated! Neither can I comprehend how there can come a time with sinners, when he that made them will *not have mercy upon them*, on the supposition that *all punishment, of all degrees and duration, is itself an exercise of mercy*. (p. 10.)

Neither can I comprehend how you reconcile many things in your scheme with the holy Scriptures. I have been used to understand the terms *death* and *perish*, being opposed to everlasting life, (John iii. 16. x. 28.) as expressive, not of the loss of being, but of well-being. But with you they signify annihilation. (p. 42.) The design of God, it seems, in giving his Son to suffer for us, was not to save us from suffering, but merely from becoming extinct, and to perpetuate our existence. And the *death* which those who keep his sayings shall never taste, (John viii. 52) meant the same thing: they shall exist forever;

a bleſſing which your ſcheme makes equally applicable to many who do not keep his ſayings, as to thoſe who do. And where do you find the above terms uſed to convey the idea of annihilation on any other ſubject; and from whence was this notion learned?*

When we are told that *God will not contend forever, neither will he be always wroth; for the ſpirit ſhould fail before him, and the ſouls which he hath made,* (Iſai. lvii. 16.) I ſuppoſed it had been meant only of them who in the context are ſaid to *put their truſt in the Lord;* and that in the preſent life, ſeeing it was promiſed them that they ſhould *poſſeſs the land and inherit his holy mountain;* of them who were of a *contrite and humble ſpirit,* and not of the *wicked,* who are likened to the *troubled ſea,* for whom there is *no peace:* but you conſider all theſe promiſes as belonging to the ſame people as the threatening in ch. xxvii. 16. *He that made them will not have mercy upon them, and he that formed them will ſhew them no favour!*

I obſerve when ſuch terms as *forever* ſeem to favour your cauſe, they are to be taken in their utmoſt latitude of meaning. If it had been ſaid of the Divine Being, he *will* contend forever, you would have introduced your ſing-ſong of *aionas* and *aionon,*† as ſometimes meaning only a limited duration; but ſeing it is ſaid he will *not* contend forever, here the word muſt be underſtood of duration without end. You muſt excuſe me, however, if I once avail myſelf of your critical labours, and remind you that *forever* in this paſſage refers merely to the preſent life, as the context plainly ſhews.

I never imagined, till I ſaw it in the writings of Univerſaliſts, that *finiſhing tranſgreſſion* and *making an end of ſin,* (Dan. ix. 24) had any reference to what was to be done after the reſurrection and the laſt judgment; and eſpecially ſince what is there predicted was to be accompliſhed within *ſeventy weeks,* or four hundred and ninety years from the time of the prophecy.

* The reader will perceive hereafter, that Mr. F. was miſtaken in ſuppoſing Mr. V. to hold the doctrine of Annihilation: this he acknowledges in Letter VI.

† Alluding to Mr. V's. quotation in *Univer. Miſcel.* No. I. p. 8.

I have been used to think that the mediation of Christ was not on behalf of fallen angels, whose nature he took not on him, of whose salvation the Scriptures are silent, and whose own ideas are, that they have nothing to do with him, Matt. viii. 29. But according to your reasonings, they also must be either saved or annihilated; yea, they must have at least the offer of salvation, otherwise their present and future sufferings would not be in mercy, which you consider as belonging to all punishment whatever.

It had been usual with me to think that the triumph of mercy, in the day of retribution, as described in James ii. 13. Psalm lxii. 12. respected another description of people than those who were to receive *judgment without mercy;* namely, those that should *so speak and so do, as they that should be judged by the perfect law of liberty;* but you have found out a scheme, it seems, in which these opposites are united in the same persons; and in which the ungodly, while receiving *judgment without mercy*, have no judgment but what is *in mercy*. (p. 10.) Is it surprising, Sir, that a man of plain and ordinary capacity should be at a loss to understand such things as these?

It would not have occurred to me that an argument could have been drawn from the threatenings of God to Israel in the present life, (Lev. xxv.) to what shall be done to the ungodly world in the life to come; yet so it is: (p. 43.) and the ground on which the analogy is justified, is the *immutability* of the divine character. But what the immutable character of God requires to be done, must be done alike in all ages, and to all people: whereas, what was there threatened to Israel was not done at the same time to other nations, nor has it been done since to any nation beside them. (Amos iii. 2. Acts xxvii. 30.) There is nothing in it analogous to his dealings with mankind, unless it be the general idea of his "making use of natural evil to correct moral evil." This being known to be the case on earth, you "cannot "but think it must be the design of future punishment." Such is the whole of your argument, which you recommend to my "serious consideration!" But how if, on the other hand, I should say, though natural evil be used on earth to correct moral evil, in society at large, yet

it is not always sent for the purpose of correcting the parties themselves? We have no proof that the men of Sodom were destroyed by fire, or Pharaoh drowned in the sea, for their good: therefore, I cannot but think there is a similar design in future punishment.

I always supposed that the sense in which God is said to be *the Saviour of all men*, especially of them that believe, (p. 44) was that in which the apostle there puts his *trust* in him; namely, as the God of providence, whose care is extended to all his creatures, but especially to believers.

I have read of the *dispensation of the fulness of times*; but the idea never occurred to me that these times were to be understood of ages beyond the last judgment. I have no doubt but the "gathering together in one all things in Christ, which are in heaven, and which are on earth, will be accomplished, and that within the limits of *time*. If it be done, as you allow it will, (p. 10) by the time "that he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power, and shall have subdued all things unto himself," it will be done by the time he shall have raised the dead, and judged the world; for THEN is this work described as being accomplished. 1 Cor. xv. 24.

In reading the account of the *new heaven and new earth*, in the xxi. chap. of the Revelations, I find amongst other things it is said, *there shall be no more death*, and afterwards *no more curse*; but I should not have thought of these things being applied to the universe at large, but merely to the inhabitants of that blessed state; and the rather seeing it is said in the same chapter, that *the fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars, shall have* THEIR PART *in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*. Neither could I have supposed it possible, from such a representation of the *second death*, to conclude that it consisted in annihilation.

By the *times of the restitution of all things*, (Acts iii. 21) I have been used to understand the times of the resurrection and the last judgment: for that till then, and no longer, will Christ be detained *in the heavens*. Whenever Christ descends from heaven, then, according to Peter,

will be the times of the reſtitution of all things: but this will be previous and in order to his raiſing the dead and judging the world (1 Theſ. iii. 16.) Conſequently theſe are the times of which the apoſtle ſpeaks. The utter overthrow which will then be given to the kingdom of Satan by the general conflagration, (2 Peter iii. 12) the deſtruction of the laſt enemy, death, by the reſurrection, (1 Cor. xv. 23, 26) and the final adjuſtment of human affairs by the laſt judgment, (Matt. xxv. 31, 46) will be *a reſtitution of all things*; the empire of ſin will be cruſhed, and the government of God completely reſtored.

But the *times* in which your ſcheme is to be accompliſhed, muſt be after the final judgment; for from that period there is an *everlaſting puniſhment* for the wicked to endure, a *lake of fire* into which they are to be caſt; (Matt. xxv, 46. Rev. xx. 15) and from which your reſtitution of all things is to recover them. Your reſtitution therefore, and that of the Scriptures, are not the ſame.

You cannot conceive of a reſtitution of all things, and of ſin being *made an end of*, unleſs all the individuals in the creation be either reconciled to God, or annihilated: but what authority have you for ſuch a conſtruction of theſe terms? Did the *reſtoring of all things* on the Meſſiah's firſt appearance, (Matt. xxvii. 11) include all individuals, ſo far as it went? When God ſaid to Zedekiah, *And thou profane, wicked prince of Iſrael, whoſe day is come, when iniquity ſhall have an end*, did it mean that he ſhould be either converted or annihilated? Ezek. xx. 25. And when the ſame language is uſed of the ſins of the people, (chap. xxv. 5) does it mean that they ſhould be either converted or annihilated? Rather is it not manifeſt that by *iniquity having an end* is meant, that the perpetrators of it were brought to condign puniſhment, ſhut up in Babylon as in a priſon, and rendered incapable of doing further miſchief? Such will be the caſe with all the ungodly at the ſecond coming of Chriſt; and this will be the reſtoration of peace, order, and happineſs to the reſt of the univerſe.

The doctrine of endleſs miſery appears to you to "con-"found all degrees of puniſhment, in giving infinite pun-"iſhment to all." (p. 42.) You, it ſeems, can conceive of no diverſity of ſuffering, unleſs it be in duration. Will

the reflection of loſt ſouls on their paſt life then be all exactly the ſame? The ſame in the objects reflected on, and conſequently the ſame in the intenſeneſs of their miſery? How groſsly abſurd, Sir, muſt be your notions of future puniſhment, to admit of ſuch an idea! Beſides, there is equal reaſon to believe that there will be different degrees of glory as of miſery. If heavenly bliſs bear any relation to the labours and ſufferings of the preſent life on behalf of Chriſt, which the Scriptures aſſure us it does, (Matt. v. 12. 2 Cor. iv. 17) theſe being diverſe, that muſt alſo be the ſame. But according to your reaſoning, there can be no diverſity unleſs it be in duration: either therefore, all degrees of happineſs muſt be confounded in giving infinite happineſs to all, or the inhabitants of heaven, as well as thoſe of hell, muſt, after a certain period, be continually diminiſhing by annihilation.

Such, Sir, are your expoſitions of Scripture. Except in the productions of a certain maniac in our own county, I never recollect to have ſeen ſo much violence done to the word of God in ſo ſmall a compaſs.

According to your ſcheme, all things work together for good to them that love not God, as well as to them that love him. Thus you confound what the Scriptures diſcriminate.

Our Lord told the Jews, That if they believed not that he was the Meſſiah, they ſhould *die in their ſins*, and wither he went they *could not come*; (John viii. 21.) but according to your ſcheme, they might die in their ſins, and yet be able to go whither he went, and inherit eternal life.

The Scriptures deſcribe a ſort of characters who ſhall be expoſed to *a certain fearful looking for of judgment*: (Heb. x. 27.) but this, according to your ſcheme, can be nothing more than annihilation. For as the caſe of the characters deſcribed is ſuggeſted to be irrevocable and hopeleſs, they cannot be puniſhed during ages of ages *in a way of mercy*, or with a view to their recovery: and as to their being puniſhed during this long period, and in the end annihilated, this would be contrary to all your ideas of puniſhment, which muſt always have its foundation in mercy. Hence it follows, that all this fearful looking for of judgment, amounts to no more

than what atheists and infidels generally prefer; death being to them an *everlasting sleep*.

Nor is your hypothesis less at variance with itself than with the holy Scriptures. Your notion of *temporary punishment* clashes with all your arguments drawn from the benevolent feelings of a good man. You ask, "Doth "not every good man love his enemies, and forgive even "the worst of them? Is there a man living whose heart "is filled with the love of God that would not promote "the best interest of his most inveterate foe, if it lay in "his power? And has not God more love than the best "of men? And are not his wisdom and his power equal "to his love?" (p. 74.)

In return I ask, Is there a man living whose heart is filled with the love of God, who would be willing that his worst enemy should be cast into hell for ages of ages, or for a single age, or even a single day, when it was in his power to deliver him from it? But God hath more love than the best of men, and his wisdom and power are equal to his love; consequently there will be no future punishment!

Your notion of annihilation will also contradict the greater part of your pretensions. You talk of *universal* salvation; but you do not believe it: for a part of the human race are to be given up as incurables to annihilation. You plead the fifth chapter to the Romans in favour of your doctrine, contending that *justification of life* will be as extensive as *condemnation*; but you believe no such thing: for a part of those who are condemned, instead of being justified and saved, will be given up as incurables to annihilation. You think you see *times* beyond the last judgment, in which *all things*, or rather as you understand it, *all persons*, are to be gathered together in Christ, and reconciled by the blood of his cross: howbeit you mean not so, neither doth your heart think so; for a part of them will be struck out of existence, and who can therefore be neither gathered nor reconciled. You pretend to unite the opinions of Calvinists and Arminians: the former, you say, render the death of Christ effectual, but limit its design to a part of mankind: the latter tend it to all, but consider it as ineffectual; while you maintain that it is designed for all, and effectual

to all. (p. 70, 71.) But this is mere pretence: you believe no such thing; for a part of mankind are to be at last annihilated. By an anecdote which you have inserted in p. 65, of your Miscellany, you flatter yourself that you have fastened a difficulty on a Mr. R. from which he cannot extricate himself, but by embracing your doctrine. But neither could he, if he did embrace it; for you no more believe that God will save all mankind, than Mr. R.

You pretend to urge it as a difficulty on me, that "either God *cannot, or will not make an end of sin;* that "there is not efficacy enough in the blood of Christ to "destroy the works of the devil; or else that the full "efficacy of the atonement is withheld by the divine "determination:" (p. 44.) But it is all pretence. If it be a difficulty, it equally bears upon your own hypothesis as upon mine. If Christ died with an intention to save all, why are not all saved? Why must a number of them be annihilated? Is it because God *cannot* bring them to repentance and salvation; or because he *will not?* Is there not efficacy enough in the blood of the cross to destroy the works of the devil, without his having recourse to a mere act of power; an act which might have been exerted without that blood being shed? Or is the full efficacy of the atonement withheld by the divine determination?

Yours, &c.

A. F.

Kettering, August 9, 1799.

LETTER IV.

Replies and Defences of former Reasonings.

Sir,

I MUST be very weak, if, while writing in a publication of which my opponent is the Editor, I should expect to have the last word. When I have said what appears to me necessary on any point, and on the whole matter

of dispute, I shall leave it to the judgment of the candid reader.

From any thing I had advanced, you had no ground to conclude that I formed an improper estimate of my own reputation. Any man, who has been in the habit of writing, and whose writings have been at all regarded by the public, must be possessed of some reputation; and whether it be small or great, it is his duty not to make use of it for the propagation of what he believes to be pernicious error.

"Truth (you say) courts the public observation of "men;" and so may error. If it be true, that wisdom *crieth in the top of high places*, it is equally true, that folly *is loud and clubborn.* The advocates of infidelity, Sir, are not less bold than yourself; nor less loud in their challenges of examination. Such challenges afford no criterion of truth: nor is it any proof of the goodness of a cause that its abettors court the public attention. They may be well aware that public prejudice is in their favour; or may entertain a much greater dread of sinking into insignificance by neglect, than of being overcome in the field of contest.

You have repeatedly reminded me of the favour which you confer upon me by permitting my papers to appear in your miscellany. Now, Sir, I consider it as no favour at all; nor as affording any proof of your impartiality. If you think otherwise, you are at perfect liberty, after introducing this series of letters, to discontinue them. If I wish to write any thing farther on the subject, I shall not be at a loss for a proper medium.

"The prejudices of both professor and profane (you "tell me) are in my favour." Had you used the term *consciences*, instead of prejudices, you would have been nearer the truth. So far as my observations extend, the prejudices of the bulk of mankind are on the other side. Deists and libertines lead the way by an open or affected rejection of all future punishment. Socinians, who generally include Universal Salvation in their scheme, follow hard after them. Mrs. Barbauld, if I remember right, in her Remarks on Mr. Wakefield's Inquiry, goes so far as to represent the ideas of access to God through a Mediator, and of punishment in a bottomless pit, as

originating in the ignorance and servility of eastern customs. Unbelievers, it is well known, rejoice in the spread of Socinianism, as being favourable to their views; and Socinians rejoice no less in the spread of Universalism, as favourable to their's. This is sufficiently manifest by the applauses which writers on your side commonly meet with in the Monthly Review. There are great numbers of nominal Christians of loose characters, who would be glad to believe your doctrine of temporary punishment, and to proceed, by an easy transition, to that of no punishment at all; nor is there any bar which prevents their falling in with these views, but the remonstrance of their consciences. They fear it is too favourable to their vices to be true, and therefore are deterred from embracing it. Such, Sir, is the "description of people," after whom you inquire; such is the company with whom you associate, and to whom you administer consolation; and such is the justness of your remark, that "the prejudices of "both professor and profane are in my favour." If you yourself had not been persuaded of the contrary, I question whether you would have given that title to my two first letters, which appears on the blue covers of your work.* The word *torments*, it is true, can give no *just* offence, as it is a scriptural expression; yet to persons who judge on these subjects merely by their feelings, the ideas conveyed by it are sufficient to prejudice them against every thing which a writer may advance.

Your magazines, Sir, I presume, would be less acceptable to many of your readers than they are, if, instead of employing so large a portion of them in attempting to prove that all will be finally happy, you were frequently to insist that some men would be tormented in hell without any mixture of mercy for a number of ages; and if you insisted on this doctrine also in your pulpit exercises, you yourself might possibly be considered as a "brawler "of damnation."

You carefully avoid claiming Universal Salvation *as a right*, and are pleased to represent my inquiry on that subject as "a quibble." I am not surprised, Sir, that you should feel reluctant on this head; that you should

* Letter I. from Mr. A. Fuller, in defence of eternal torments.

decline the defence of your friend, and that you should alternately compliment and reproach your opponent, as if to keep him at a distance from the subject. (No i. p. 5. No. xxxiv. p. 309.) If I mistake not, this is a fundamental principle in your system, and that which proves it to be fundamentally wrong. There is no need of having recourse to the pieces of other writers; your own productions afford sufficient evidence that the salvation for which you plead is not that which arises from the free grace of God through Jesus Christ; and consequently, that it is no part of the salvation revealed in the gospel. You reject the idea of invalidating the divine threatnings towards sinners, (No. xxxiv. p. 310.) admitting "them in "their full latitude, and the execution of them too;" maintaining that "God will deal with his creatures ac- "cording to character;" and that sinners will be punish- "according to their works." (No. ii. p. 42.) Now, Sir, if there be any meaning in all this language, it is, That *justice* will have its course on the ungodly; and that whatever punishment they endure, whether it be vindictive or corrective, endless or temporary, it is all that their sins *deserve*. If the threatenings of God mean no more than a punishment which is temporary, and for the good of sinners, their conduct can deserve no more; for we cannot have a more certain rule of estimating the just demerit of sin, than the wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against it. But if sinners endure the full desert of their sin, there is no room for grace, or *undeserved favour*; nor is any place left for the work of mediation. A criminal who has suffered the full penalty of the law, has no right to be told that his liberation is an act of grace, or that it was owing to the mediation of another. Your Universal Salvation, therefore, is no part of that which arises from the grace of God, or the death of Christ; nor is it, properly speaking, salvation at all, but a legal discharge in consequence of a full satisfaction to divine justice being made by the sufferings of the sinner.

If you contend that the liberation of the sinner *is* owing to the grace of God, through the mediation of his Son, which mitigates and shortens his punishment, then you at once give up all you have before maintained; That sinners will be punished *according to their works*, and that

the threatenings of God will be fully executed upon them. You may have read of "instances of both punishment "and pardon to the same persons, and for the same sins:" (No. xxxv. p. 337.) but this must be where the punishment has not been according to the desert of the sin, otherwise there had been no need of pardon.

You talk much of my dealing in "*suppositions* instead "of arguments," and of my "resting my conclusions on "unfounded assumptions."

I have carefully examined these charges and am unable to perceive the justice of them in a single instance. Though the letter which appeared in the Evangelical Magazine was chiefly in the form of supposition, yet that supposition was not destitute of argument to support it. It is possible, Sir, though it does not appear to have occurred to your mind, that arguments themselves may be conveyed under the form of suppositions. To convince you that this was the case in the above letter, I will put the very passage to which you object, into the form of argument.

The Scriptures teach us that those who at a certain period are found *filthy, shall be filthy still;* that they shall be cast into that *bottomless pit* which was prepared for the devil and his angels; and that they shall dwell with *everlasting burnings.*

But your doctrine teaches, that though they be filthy at death or judgment, or any other period, yet they shall not be *always so;* that though they be cast into the pit of destruction, yet it shall not prove *bottomless;* and that though they have to encounter devouring fire, yet they shall not dwell with *everlasting* burnings.

Therefore your doctrine is antiscriptural. But if your doctrine be antiscriptural, it is of that nature which tends to deceive the souls of men; and you will not be able to look them in the face another day, and still less HIM who hath charged you to be pure from the blood of all men.

The first three positions contain the argument, and the last the inference.

I should think "the world," or rather the reader, did not need to be informed what argument there was in this string of suppositions: if he did, however, I have attempted, at your request, to give him that information.

With reſpect to building on "unfounded aſſumptions," for which I am accuſed of "betraying my ignorance of "the ſubject I have written againſt," (No. ii. p. 45.) you have given us two inſtances, which I ſhall briefly examine.

Firſt: I had aſked, What doctrine, *beſides* that of Univerſal Salvation, will you find in the Bible which affords encouragement to a ſinner going on ſtill in his treſpaſſes; and which furniſhes ground for hope and joy, even ſuppoſing him to perſevere in ſin till death? What principle is it that is here aſſumed? Why, (you anſwer) that the doctrine of Univerſal Salvation *does* afford encouragement to a ſinner going on ſtill in his treſpaſſes, and *does* furniſh ground for hope and joy, even ſuppoſing him to perſevere in ſin till death. And is this indeed a queſtion? I took it for a ſelf-evident truth, and ſuppoſed you muſt and would have acknowledged it. Whether you will or not, however, I appeal to the common ſenſe of the reader, whether any poſition can be more ſelf-evident than the following—If the Scriptures teach that all men ſhall be finally ſaved, every ſinner, whatever be his vicious courſes, is encouraged to expect eternal life: and though he ſhould perſiſt in ſin, till death, is warranted to hope and rejoice in the proſpect of all being well with him at laſt. For any man to deny this poſition, is to deny what is ſelf-evident, and there can be no farther reaſoning with him.

To allege in anſwer, That it will be always ill with the wicked *while he continues ſo*, is trifling: for if the ſinner be taught to believe at ſome future period beyond this life he ſhall be delivered both from ſin and puniſhment—whether the former branch of this deliverance afford him joy or not, the latter muſt.

The ſame queſtion, you ſay, might be aſked concerning the doctrine of election. It might; but I ſhould readily anſwer, No ſinner while going on ſtill in his treſpaſſes is warranted to conſider himſelf as elected to ſalvation: therefore that doctrine affords no ground of hope and joy to perſons of this deſcription. Can you ſay the ſame of the doctrine of Univerſal Salvation? If there were the ſame ground for an ungodly ſinner to conclude himſelf elected, as your doctrine affords for his concluding that he ſhall be eternally ſaved, the caſes would be

parallel; and both these doctrines would be alike subject to the charge of comforting those whom God would not have comforted: but as this is not true of election, your notion is still solitary, and your difficulty remains where it was. All the encomiums which you pass upon the universal scheme (No. ii. p. 41—44.) furnishes not a single example of any other divine truth which gives encouragement to a sinner, while in his sins, to believe that in the end it shall be well with him. The question therefore still returns upon you, *What doctrine* BESIDES *that of Universal Salvation will you find in the Bible which affords encouragement to a sinner going on still in his trespasses, and which furnishes ground for hope and joy, even supposing him to persevere in them till death?*

I do not say, "let the world judge" whether this question proceeded on any *unfounded assumption*, and whether it be equally applicable to election as to Universal Salvation, because I imagine it will be but a very small part of the world that will examine our productions: but I am willing to make my appeal to the intelligent and impartial reader. And with respect to you, Sir, the task which you have set yourself is before you; either to "confess it to be true," that your doctrine gives encouragement, hope and joy to wicked men; or to "expose the falsehood of this supposition more fully."

In the second place, you charge me with "taking it "for granted that your views invalidate the divine "threatenings towards sinners;" and intimate that there is no "reason" in what I say, but upon the supposition of your denying "all future punishment." (No. ii. p. 45.) That I never supposed you to deny all future punishment, I have already proved; and that any thing which I advanced required such a supposition, you have not hitherto made appear. As to your invalidating the divine threatenings, so far as the doctrine of Universal Salvation appears to me to operate in that way, so far I must of necessity believe that you do: but whatever may be my belief, the question is, Have I built any conclusion upon it as an acknowledged truth? If so, how came I to *entreat you to consider whether it was not so?* Is it usual to entreat an opponent to consider whether that which we take for granted as an acknowledged truth, be

true? Undoubtedly I suggested this idea to you as being my judgment, which, however, I did not desire to impose upon you, any farther than as it was supported by evidence, and therefore at the same time intimated what was the ground of that judgment; namely, *the near resemblance between your labours and those of the deceiver of mankind.* If you cannot perceive this resemblance, I cannot help it. Other people can and will. He persuaded his auditors that though they should transgress, yet the evil they had dreaded would not come upon them: they believed—and were not afraid to transgress. You persuade your auditors that though they should die in their sins, yet the evil will not be *so great* as they had been used to apprehend—God hath not said, ye shall die eternally; and he means that you shall all come where Jesus is. If they believe, must they not be *less afraid* of transgression than before?

And now, Sir, who is "ignorant," and who has been employed in "raising dust to hide the truth," are questions which I leave you to resolve. It is enough for me if I have proved your charges to be unfounded: for if this be accomplished, your work still returns upon your hands; as it will follow, that, notwithstanding all your challenges, and calling out for more to be written, you have not yet answered the first letter.

Yours, &c.

A. F.

LETTER V.

Evidences of endless punishment.

SIR,

YOU seem to wish to persuade your readers that the grounds on which I rest my belief of the doctrine of endless punishment are very slender. The truth is, I have not at present attempted to state those grounds. Considering myself as not engaged in a formal controversy, I only introduced a few passages; and to several of them you have hitherto made no reply. The principal grounds

on which I reſt my belief of the doctrine you oppoſe, are as follow:—

I. *All thoſe paſſages of ſcripture which deſcribe the future ſtates of men in contraſt.*

"Men of the world, who have their portion in this "life: I ſhall be ſatisfied when I awake in thy likeneſs "—The hope of the righteous ſhall be gladneſs: but "the expectation of the wicked ſhall periſh—The wicked "is driven away in his wickedneſs: but the righteous "hath hope in his death—And many of them that ſleep "in the duſt of the earth ſhall awake; ſome to everlaſt-"ing life, and ſome to ſhame and everlaſting contempt "—He will gather his wheat into the garner, and will "burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire—Wide is the "gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to deſtruction, "and many there be who go in thereat; becauſe ſtrait is "the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, "and few there be that find it—Not every one that ſaith, "Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven; "but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heav-"en—Many ſhall come from the eaſt and weſt, and ſhall "ſit down with Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob in the "kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom "ſhall be caſt out into outer darkneſs; there ſhall be "weeping and gnaſhing of teeth—Gather ye firſt the "tares, and bind them in bundles, to burn them: but "gather the wheat into my barn—The Son of Man ſhall "ſend forth his angels, and they ſhall gather out of his "kingdom all things that offend, and them that do in-"iquity, and ſhall caſt them into a furnace of fire; there "ſhall be wailing and gnaſhing of teeth: then ſhall the "righteous ſhine forth as the ſun in the kingdom of their "Father—The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, "that gathered fiſh of every kind; which, when it was "full they drew to the ſhore, and ſat down, and gather-"ed the good into veſſels, and caſt the bad away. So "ſhall it be at the end of the world; the angels ſhall "come forth, and ſever the wicked from among the juſt, "and ſhall caſt them into the furnace of fire; there ſhall "be wailing and gnaſhing of teeth—Bleſſed is that ſer-"vant, whom, when his Lord cometh, he ſhall find ſo "doing: but and if that evil ſervant ſhould ſay in his

" heart, My Lord delayeth his coming, and ſhall begin
" to ſmite his fellow-ſervants, and to eat and drink with
" the drunken, the lord of that ſervant ſhall come in a
" day, when he looketh not for him, and ſhall cut him
" aſunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypo-
" crites; there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth—
" Well done, good and faithful ſervant; enter thou into
" the joy of thy Lord. But caſt ye out the unprofitable
" ſervant, into outer darkneſs; there ſhall be weeping
" and gnaſhing of teeth—Then ſhall the King ſay unto
" them on his right hand, Come, ye bleſſed of my Father,
" inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the founda-
" tion of the world—Then ſhall he alſo ſay unto them on
" the left hand, Depart from me, ye curſed, into everlaſt-
" ing fire, prepared for the devil and his angels—And theſe
" ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment; but the right-
" eous into everlaſting life—He that believeth and is
" baptized ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not ſhall
" be damned—Bleſſed are ye when men ſhall hate you
" for the Son of Man's ſake. Rejoice ye in that day,
" and leap for joy; for behold, your reward is great in
" heaven. But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have
" received your conſolation—He that heareth my ſay-
" ings, and doeth them, is like unto a man who built his
" houſe upon a rock; and when the flood aroſe, the ſtorm
" beat vehemently againſt that houſe, and could not ſhake
" it; for it was founded on a rock. But he that heareth
" and doeth not, is like unto a man who built his houſe
" upon the earth, againſt which the ſtorm did beat vehe-
" mently, and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that
" houſe was great—God ſo loved the world, that he gave
" his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth on him,
" ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life—All that are
" in their graves ſhall come forth; they that have done
" good unto the reſurrection of life, and they that have
" done evil unto the reſurrection of damnation—Hath not
" the potter power over the clay, of the ſame lump to make
" one veſſel unto honour, and another unto diſhonour?
" What if God, willing to ſhew his wrath, and to make
" his power known, endured with much long-ſuffering
" the veſſels of wrath fitted to deſtruction; and that he
" might make known the riches of his glory on the veſſels

"of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory—"The Lord knoweth them that are his—But in a great "house there are vessels to honour and vessels to dishon-"our—Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for what-"soever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he "that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corrup-"tion; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spir-"it reap life everlasting—That which beareth thorns and "briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end "is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded bet-"ter things of you, and which accompany salvation."*

I consider these passages as designed to express THE FINAL STATES OF MEN, which if they be, it is the same thing in effect as their being designed to express the doctrine of endless punishment; for if the descriptions here given of the portion of the wicked denote their *final* state, there is no possibility of another state succeeding it.

That the above passages do express the *final* states of men, may appear from the following considerations:—

1. The state of the righteous, which is all along opposed to that of the wicked, is allowed to be final: and if the other were not the same, it would not have been in such a variety of forms contrasted with it; for it would not be a contrast.

2. All these passages are totally silent, as to any other state following that of destruction, damnation, &c. If the punishment threatened to ungodly men had been only a purgation, or temporary correction, we might have expected that something like this would have been intimated. It is supposed that some who are upon the right foundation may yet build upon it, *wood, and hay, and stubble;* and that the party shall *suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved*, though it be *as by fire*. Now if the doctrine of Universal Salvation were true, we might expect some such account of all lapsed intelligences, when their future state is described: but nothing like it occurs in any of the foregoing passages, nor in any other.

* Psal. xvii. 14, 15. Prov. x. 28. xiv. 32. Dan. xii. 2. Matt. iii. 12. vii. 13, 14, 21. viii. 11, 12. xiii. 30, 40—43, 47—50. xxiv. 46—51. xxv. 23, 30, 34, 41, 46. Mark xvi. 16. Luke vi. 23, 24, 47, 49. John iii. 16. v. 29. Rom. ix. 21—23. 2 Tim. ii. 19, 20. Gal. vi. 7, 8. Heb. vi. 8, 9.

3. The phraſeology of the greater part of them is inconſiſtent with any other ſtate following that which they deſcribe. On the ſuppoſition of ſalvation being appointed as the ultimate portion of thoſe who die in their ſins, they have not *their portion in this life;* but will, equally with thoſe who die in the Lord, *behold his righteouſneſs, and be ſatisfied in his likeneſs.* Their expectation ſhall not *periſh;* but ſhall iſſue, as well as that of the righteous, in *gladneſs:* and though *driven away in their wickedneſs*, yet they have *hope in their death*, and that hope ſhall be realized. The broad way doth not lead to *deſtruction*, but merely to a temporary correction, the end of which is everlaſting life. The chaff will not be burned, but turned into wheat, and gathered into the garner. The tares will be the ſame, and gathered into the barn; and the bad fiſh will be turned into good, and gathered into veſſels. The curſed, as well as the bleſſed, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God; which alſo was prepared for them from the foundation of the world. There may be a woe againſt the wicked, that they ſhall be kept from their conſolation for a long time, but not that they *have received it.* Thoſe who in the preſent life believe *not* in Chriſt ſhall not *periſh*, but have everlaſting life. This life alſo is improperly repreſented as the ſeed-time, and the life to come as the harveſt, inaſmuch as the ſeeds of heavenly bliſs may be ſown in hell: and though the ſinner may reap corruption, as the fruit of all his preſent doings, yet that corruption will not be the oppoſite of *everlaſting life*, ſeeing it will iſſue in it. Finally: Though they *bear briars and thorns*, yet their END is not *to be burned*, but to obtain ſalvation.

To the foregoing Scripture teſtimonies may be added,

II. *All thoſe paſſages which ſpeak of the duration of future puniſhment by the the terms "everlaſting, eternal, forever, and forever and ever:"*—

"Some ſhall awake to everlaſting life, and ſome to "ſhame and *everlaſting* contempt—It is better for thee to "enter into life halt, or maimed, than, having two hands, "or two feet, to be caſt into *everlaſting* fire—Depart ye "curſed into *everlaſting* fire—And theſe ſhall go into *ev-* "*erlaſting* puniſhment—They ſhall be puniſhed with *ever-* "*laſting* deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and "from the glory of his power—He that ſhall blaſpheme

"againſt the Holy Ghoſt is in danger of (or ſubject to) "*eternal* damnation—The inhabitants of Sodom and "Gomorrha are ſet forth for an example, ſuffering the "vengeance of *eternal* fire—Theſe are wells without wa-"ter, clouds that are carried with a tempeſt, to whom the "miſt of darkneſs is reſerved *forever*—Wandering ſtars, "to whom is reſerved the blackneſs of darkneſs *forever*— "If any man worſhip the beaſt, or his image, and receive "his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the ſame ſhall "drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured "out without mixture into the cup of his indignation: "and he ſhall be tormented with fire and brimſtone in "the preſence of the holy angels, and in the preſence of "the Lamb: and the ſmoke of their torment aſcendeth "up *forever and ever*: and they have no reſt day nor "night—And they ſaid, Alleluia. And her ſmoke roſe "up *forever and ever*—And the devil that deceived them "was caſt into the lake of fire and brimſtone, where the "beaſt and the falſe prophet are; and ſhall be torment-"ed day and night *forever and ever.*"*

I have not mentioned Iſai. xxxiii. 14, becauſe I wiſh to introduce no paſſage but what ſhall be allowed to refer to a future life. The Hebrew word עולם, in Dan. xii. 2. anſwers to the Greek αιων; and whatever may be ſaid of the ambiguity of the term, the antitheſis in this paſſage, as in Matt. xxv. 46, determines it to mean the ſame when applied to "ſhame and contempt," as when applied to life.

As to the term αιωνιος, rendered *everlaſting* or *eternal*, which you conſider as proving nothing on account of its ambiguity, there is a rule of interpretation which I have long underſtood to be uſed on other ſubjects by all good critics, and which I conſider as preferable to your's. In my next letter I may examine their comparative merits. This rule is, *That every term be taken in its* PROPER *ſenſe, except there be ſomething in the ſubject or connexion which requires it to be taken otherwiſe.* Now, ſo far as my ac-

* Dan. xii. 2. Matt. xviii. 8. xxv. 41—46. 2 Theſſ. i. 9. Mark iii. 29. Jude 7. 2 Pet. ii. 17. Jude 13. Rev. xiv. 10, 11. xix. 3. xx. 10.

quaintance with this subject extends, it appears to be generally allowed by lexicographers, that αἰων is a compound of αει and ων, and that its literal meaning is *always being*;* also that the meaning of its derivative αἰωνιος is *endless*, *everlasting*, or *eternal*. This term, αἰωνιος which is very sparingly applied in the New Testament to limited duration, I always take in its proper sense, except there be something in the connexion or subject, which requires it to be taken otherwise: and as I do not find this to be the case in any of those places where it is applied to punishment, I see no reason in these cases to depart from its proper acceptation. Everlasting punishment is in some of them opposed to everlasting life, which, so far as an antithesis can go to fix the meaning of a term, determines it to be of the same force and extent.

To allege that the *subject* requires a different meaning in this case to be given to the term, is to assume what will not be granted. The *proof* that has been offered on this point will be considered hereafter.

With respect to the phrases εις τον αἰωνα, *for ever*, and εις τας αἰωνας των αἰωνων, *forever and ever*, I believe you will not find a single example in all the New Testament of their being used to convey any other than the idea of endless duration. You tell us that εις αἰωνας αἰωνων, *forever and ever*, in Rev. xiv. 11, should be rendered "to "the age of ages." Are you certain of this? Admit-

* Aristotle the philosopher, who lived upwards of three hundred years before the New Testament was written, plainly tells us the meaning which the Greek writers of his time, and those who in his time, were accounted ancients, affixed to this term. Speaking of the gods, whom he considered as immortal, and as having their residence above the heavens, he says, "The beings which exist there, neither exist in place, nor does time make them grow old; nor undergo they any change, being placed beyond the motion even of those who are the farthest removed (from the centre;) but possessing an unchangeable life, free from all outward impressions, perfectly happy, and self-sufficient, they continue through all αἰωνα, eternity. And this the ancients admirably signified by the word itself: for they call the time of each person's life his αἰων, inasmuch as according to the laws of nature, nothing (respecting him) exists out of the limits of it; and for the same reason that which comprehends the duration of the whole heaven, the whole of infinite time, and infinity itself, is called αἰωνα, eternity; taking its name from always being, (αει ειναι) immortal and divine."

ting the principle of your translation, some would have rendered it *to ages of ages:* but render it how you will, the *meaning* of the phrase is the same. You might render it thus in other instances, wherein it is applied to the happiness of the righteous, or the glory to be ascribed to God; but this would not prove that such happiness and such glory were of limited duration, or that the phrase in question is expressive of it.

To the above may be added,

III. *All those passages which express the duration of future punishment by implication, or by forms of speech which imply the doctrine in question.*

"I pray for them: I pray not for the world—The "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost *shall not be forgiven* "*unto men*, neither in this world, neither in the world to "come—He hath *never forgiveness*; but is in danger of "eternal damnation—There is a sin unto death: I do "not say that ye shall pray for it—It is impossible to "renew them again unto repentance—If we sin wilfully "after we have received the knowledge of the truth, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins; but a fear-"ful looking for of judgment, which shall devour the "adversaries—What is a man profited, if he shall gain "the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?— "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is be-"trayed: it had been good for that man if he had not "been born—Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not "quenched *—Betwixt us and you there is a great gulph "fixed; so that they who would pass from hence to you "cannot, neither can they pass to us who would come "from thence—He that believeth not the Son shall *not* "*see life*; but the wrath of God *abideth on him*—I go my "way, and ye shall seek me, and shall *die in your sins*; "whither I go *ye cannot come*—Whose *end* is destruction "—He that sheweth no mercy shall have *judgment with-*"*out mercy.*"†

* Several times repeated in a few verses.

† John xvi. 9. Matt xii. 31, 32 Mark iii. 29. 1 John v. 16. Heb. vi. 6. x. 26, 27. Luke ix. 25. Matt. xxvi. 24. Mark ix. 43—48. Luke xvi. 26. John iii. 36. viii. 21. Phil. iii. 19. James ii. 13.

If there be ſome for whom Jeſus did not pray, there are ſome who will have no ſhare in the benefits of his mediation, without which they cannot be ſaved. If there be ſome that never will be forgiven, there are ſome that never will be ſaved; for forgiveneſs is an eſſential branch of ſalvation. Let there be what uncertainty there may in the word *eternal* in this inſtance, ſtill the meaning of it is fixed by the other branch of the ſentence, *they ſhall never be forgiven.* It is equal to John x. 28. *I give unto them eternal life, and they ſhall never periſh.* If there were any uncertainty as to the meaning of the word *eternal* in this latter paſſage, yet the other branch of the ſentence would ſettle it: for that muſt be endleſs life which is oppoſed to their *ever periſhing;* and by the ſame rule, that muſt be endleſs damnation which is oppoſed to their *ever being forgiven.* If there be a ſin, for the pardon of which Chriſtians are forbidden to pray, it muſt be on account of its being the revealed will of God that it never ſhould be pardoned. If repentance be abſolutely neceſſary to forgiveneſs, and there be ſome whom it is impoſſible ſhould be renewed again unto repentance, there are ſome whoſe ſalvation is impoſſible. If there be *no more ſacrifice for ſins, but a fearful looking for of judgment,* this is the ſame thing as the ſacrifice already offered being of no ſaving effect: for if it were otherwiſe, the language would not contain any peculiar threatening againſt the wilful ſinner, as it would be no more than might be ſaid to any ſinner; nor would a *fearful looking for of judgment* be his certain doom. If the ſouls of ſome men will be *loſt*, or *caſt away*, they cannot all be *ſaved*; ſeeing theſe things are oppoſites. A man may be loſt in deſert, and yet ſaved in fact; or he may *ſuffer loſs*, and yet himſelf be ſaved: but he cannot be loſt, ſo as to be caſt away, and yet finally ſaved; for theſe are perfect contraries. Whatever may be the preciſe idea of the *fire*, and the *worm*, there can be no doubt of their expreſſing the puniſhment of the wicked; and it being declared of the one that it *dieth not*, and of the other that *it is not quenched*, it is the ſame thing as their being declared to be endleſs. It can be ſaid of no man, on the principle of Univerſal Salvation, that *it were good for him not to have been born:* as whatever he may endure for a ſeaſon, an eternal weight of glory will

infinitely outweigh it. An *impaſſable gulph* between the bleſſed and the accurſed equally militates againſt the recovery of the one, as the relapſe of the other. If ſome ſhall *not ſee life*, but the wrath of God *abideth* on them; if thoſe who die in their ſins ſhall not come where Jeſus is; if their *end* be deſtruction, and their portion be *judgment without mercy*; there muſt be ſome who will not be finally ſaved.

To theſe may be added,

IV. *All thoſe paſſages which intimate that a change of heart, and a preparedneſs for heaven, are confined to the preſent life:—*

" Seek ye the Lord *while he may be found*; call ye upon him *while he is near*; let the wicked forſake his way; " and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him " return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon " him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon " —Becauſe I have called, and ye refuſed; I have " ſtretched out my hand, and no man regarded . . . . " I alſo will laugh at your calamity, and mock when " your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as deſola- " tion, and your deſtruction cometh as a whirlwind; " when diſtreſs and anguiſh come upon you; then ſhall " they call upon me, but I will not anſwer; they ſhall " ſeek me early, but ſhall not find me—Then ſaid one " unto him, Lord, are there few that ſhall be ſaved? " And he ſaid unto them, Strive to enter in at the ſtrait " gate: for many, I ſay unto you, ſhall ſeek to enter in " and ſhall not be able—When *once* the maſter of the " houſe hath riſen up, and ſhut to the door, and ye be- " gin to ſtand without, and to knock at the door, ſaying, " Lord, Lord, open unto us; he ſhall anſwer and ſay " unto you, I know you not whence you are . . . . " Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity . . . . there " ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth—While ye have " the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the chil- " dren of light—While they (the fooliſh virgins) went " to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were " *ready* went in with him to the marriage, and *the door* " *was ſhut*—We beſeech you, that ye receive not the " grace of God in vain . . . . Behold *now* is the accepted

" time, *now* is the day of salvation—To-day, if ye will " hear his voice, harden not your hearts—Looking dili- " gently lest any man fail of the grace of God . . . . lest " there be any fornicator or profane person, as Esau, " who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For " ye know how that afterward, when he would have in- " herited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no " place of repentance, though he sought it carefully " with tears—He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; " and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that " is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is " holy, let him be holy still."*

According to these Scriptures there will be no successful calling upon the Lord after a certain period; and consequently, no salvation—Whether there be few that shall ultimately be saved, our Lord does not inform us; but he assures us that there will be many who will *not be saved;* or, which is the same thing, who will not be able to enter in at the strait gate. None, it is plainly intimated, will be able to enter there, who have not agonized here. There will be no believing unto salvation, but *while we have the light;* nor any admission into the kingdom, unless we be *ready at the coming of the Lord.* The present is the *accepted time, the day of salvation,* or the season for sinners to be saved. If we continue to harden our hearts through life, he will swear in his wrath that we shall not enter into his rest. If we *turn away from him who speaketh from heaven,* it will be equally impossible for us to obtain the blessing, as it was for Esau, after he had despised his birthright. Finally: Beyond a certain period there shall be no more change of character; but every one will have received that impression which shall remain forever, whether he be just or unjust, filthy or holy.

In this letter I have endeavoured to state the grounds of my own persuasion: in the next I may examine the reasonings and objections which you have advanced against it. The greater part of this evidence being taken

* Isai. lv. 6, 7. Prov. i. 24—28. Luke xiii. 24—29. John xii. 36. Matt. xxv. 5—13. 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. Heb. iii. 7, 11. xii. 15—17. Rev. xxii. 11.

from our Lord's discourses, who knew the truth, and was himself to be the judge of the world, renders it peculiarly interesting. If a preacher in these times delivered half so much on the subject, you would denominate him "a brawler of damnation."

Yours, &c.

A. F.

LETTER VI.

Replies to Objections.

SIR,

IN a former letter I suggested, That whether the Scriptures teach the doctrine of endless punishment, or not, they certainly *appear* to do so. Whether this suggestion was unfounded, the evidence in my last letter must determine. You attempt, however, to discredit it, by alleging the few instances in which the terms *ever*, *everlasting*, &c. as connected with future punishment, are used in the Scriptures.

"*Everlasting*, as connected with the future punishment "of *men*, (you say) is used only *five* times in the Old and "New Testament; and yet this same word is used in "the Scriptures at least *ninety* times, very generally in- "deed in relation to things that either have ended, or "must end."—You proceed, "As to the word *eternal*, "which is of the same meaning, it is used in the text and "margin upwards of *forty* times in the whole Bible; out "of which there are only *two* which can be supposed to "relate to future punishment."* You should have proceeded a little farther, Sir, and have told us how often the terms *ever*, *forever*, and *forever and ever*, are applied to this subject; as the distinction between them and the words *everlasting* and *eternal*, is chiefly English, and as you have allowed that it is from the use of the one, as well as the other, that I suppose the Scriptures must "appear" to teach the doctrine of endless punishment.

* Univ. Mis. No. xxxv. p. 348.

As a candid reasoner, you should also have forborne to mention Jude 6. with a view to diminish the number of testimonies; as it is not to the endless punishment of *men* only that you object. By these means, your number would at least have extended to *eleven*, instead of seven.

But passing this, I shall offer a few observations on your reasoning.—First: If the term *everlasting* be applied to future punishment five or six times out of ninety, in which it is used in the Scriptures, this may be as large a proportion as the subject requires. It is applied in the Scriptures to more than twenty different subjects; so that to be applied five or six times to one, is full as frequent a use of it as ought to be expected.

Secondly: If the application of the term *everlasting* to future punishment, only five or six times, discredit the very *appearance* of its being endless, the same or nearly the same may be said of *the existence of God*, to which it is applied not much more frequently. You might go over a great part of the sacred writings on this subject, as you do on the other, telling us that not only many of the Old Testament writers make no use of it, but a large proportion of the New; that Matthew never applies the word to this subject, nor Mark, nor Luke, nor John; that it is not so applied in the Acts of the apostles; and though Paul once uses it in his epistle to the Romans, yet he closes that and all his other epistles without *so* using it again; that James did not use it, nor Peter, nor John, either in his three epistles, or in the Apocalypse. And when you had thus established your point, you might ask, with an air of triumph, "Is this a proof that the "Scriptures *appear* to teach" the eternal existence of God? Truly, Sir, I am ashamed to refute such trifling; yet if I were not, your readers might be told, that doubtless I had "cogent reasons" for my silence.

Thirdly: If any conclusion can be drawn from the number of times in which a term is used in the Scriptures, that number should be ascertained from the languages in which they were written, and not from a translation, which on such a subject proves nothing; but if this had been done, as it certainly ought, by a writer of your pretensions, we should have heard nothing of number *two*, nor of number *five*.

Fourthly: You tell us not only that "the word ever-"lasting is used very generally indeed in relation to "things that either have ended, or must end," but that the word which is so rendered, was by the Old Testament writers "most generally" so applied.* By "the "word which we render everlasting," I suppose you mean עוֹלָם, though there are other words, as well as this, which are rendered everlasting, and this word is not always so rendered. I have carefully examined it by a Hebrew concordance, and, according to the best of my judgment, noticed, as I went along, when it is applied to limited, and when to unlimited duration; and I find that, though it is *frequently* used to express the former, yet it is *more frequently*, even in the Old Testament, applied to the latter. I do not allege this fact as being of any consequence to the argument; for if it had been on the other side, it would have proved nothing. It would not have been at all surprising, if, in a book wherein so little is revealed concerning a future state, the word should have been used *much more* frequently in a figurative, than in a proper sense; but as far as I am able to judge, the fact is otherwise.

In looking over the various passages in which the word occurs, I perceive that in many of those instances which I noted as examples of the limited use of it, the limitation is such as arises necessarily from the kind of duration, or state of being, which is spoken of. When Hannah devoted her child Samuel to the Lord *forever*, there was no limitation in her mind: she did not intend that he should *ever* return to a private life. Thus also, when it is said of a servant whose ear was bored in his master's house, he shall serve him *forever*, the meaning is, that he should never go out free. And when Jonah lamented that the earth with her bars was about him *forever*, the term is not expressive of what it actually *proved*, namely, a three-days imprisonment, as you unaccountably construe it;† but of what it was *in his apprehensions*, which were, that he was cut off from the land of the living, and should *never* more see the light.

* Univ. Mis. No. xxxv. p. 328, 329.

† Univ. Mis. No. i. p. 6.

So far as my observations extend, the word, whenever applied to a *future state*, is to be taken in the endless sense; and this you yourself will allow, *except in those passages which relate to future punishment.* You therefore plead for a meaning to the term, in relation to this subject, which has nothing parallel in the Scriptures to support it.

In the New Testament, the future state is a frequent topic with the sacred writers; and there, as might be expected, the terms rendered *everlasting*, *eternal*, *forever*, &c. are generally applied in the endless sense. Of this you seem to be aware; and therefore, after asserting that, by Old Testament writers, the term rendered everlasting was "most generally" applied otherwise, you only add concerning New Testament writers, that they "use it "but a few times in relation to future punishment;" a remark, as we have already seen, of but very little account. If a particular term should be applied to one subject only five or six times, it does not follow that the evidence is scanty. There may be other terms equally expressive of the same thing; and the foregoing letter, it is presumed, has given proof that this is the case in the present instance. And if there were no other terms to convey the sentiment, five or six solemn asseverations on any one subject ought to be reckoned sufficient, and more than sufficient to command our assent; and if so, surely they may be allowed to justify the assertion, that the Scriptures *appear*, at least, to teach the doctrine of everlasting punishment.

In answering what I considered as a misconstruction of a passage of Scripture (Rev. xiv. 19.) I suggested that the phrase, *day and night*, was not expressive of a successive or terminable duration, but a figurative mode of speech, denoting *perpetuity*. "It follows then (say you) "that your best ground for believing that there is no "successive duration after the end of thi world, is only "a figurative expression or two."* Did ever a writer draw such an inference! What I alleged was not for the purpose of proving endless punishment, but merely to correct what I considered as a misinterpretation of a pas-

* Univ. Mis. No. xxxv. p. 329.

ſage of Scripture. If this be your method of drawing conſequences, we need not be ſurpriſed at your inferring the doctrine of Univerſal Salvation from the holy Scriptures.

I thought that you, as well as myſelf, had better not have attempted to criticize on Hebrew and Greek terms. You think otherwiſe. Very well: we have a right then to expect more at your hands. Yet, methinks, you ſhould have been contented to meet an opponent, who never profeſſed to have a competent acquaintance with either of thoſe languages, on his own ground: or if not, you ſhould either have aſſumed a little leſs conſequence, or have ſupported your pretenſions with a little better evidence. To be ſure it was very kind in you to inform me, that though αιων and αιωνιος agree, in ſome reſpects, with the Engliſh words *eternity* and *eternal*, yet they will not always bear to be rendered by theſe terms. I ought equally to thank you, no doubt, for teaching me, and that repeatedly, that "as for the word *eternal*, it is the "ſame in the original which is tranſlated everlaſting."* Seriouſly, May not a perſon, without pretending to be qualified for Greek criticiſms, underſtand ſo much of the meaning of words as to ſtand in no need of the foregoing information? Nay more: Is it not poſſible for him to know that the Greek words αιων and αιωνιος will not always bear to be rendered by the Engliſh words *eternity*, *everlaſting*, or *eternal;* and yet perceive no evidence that the one are *leſs expreſſive of endleſs duration than the other?*

This, if it muſt be ſo called, was my "hypotheſis." To overturn it, you allege that the Greek terms will "admit of a plural," and of the pronouns *this* and *that* before them, which the Engliſh will not.† So far as this is the caſe, it may prove that there is *ſome difference* between them; but not that this difference conſiſts in the one being *leſs expreſſive of endleſs duration than the other.* Words in Engliſh, that are properly expreſſive of endleſs duration, may not ordinarily admit of a plural; and if this were univerſally the caſe, it would not follow that it is the ſame in Greek. Nor is it ſo: for the idea of end-

* No. i. p. 7. No. xxxv. p. 238.

† Univ. Miſ. No. xxxv. p. 332, 333.

leſs duration is frequently conveyed by theſe very plural forms of expreſſion. Thus in Epheſ. iii. 11. κατα προθεσιν των αιωνων; *according to his eternal purpoſe.* So alſo in 1 Tim. i. 17. Τω δε βασιλει των αιωνων, αφθαρτω, αορατω, μονω σοφω Θεω, τιμη και δοξα εις τους αιωνας των αιωνων. *Now unto the king eternal, immortal inviſible, the only wiſe God, be honour and glory, forever and ever.* Render theſe paſſages how you will, you cannot do them juſtice unleſs you expreſs the idea of unlimited duration. And though the Engliſh terms may not admit of what is termed a plural form, yet they admit of what is equal to it: for though we do not ſay *everlaſtings*, nor *eternities*, yet we ſay *forever and ever*; and you might as well contend, that *forever* cannot properly mean unlimited duration, ſeeing another *ever* may be added to it, as that αιων muſt needs mean a limited duration, on account of its admitting a plural form of expreſſion. You might alſo, with equal propriety, plead for a plurality of *evers* in futurity, from the Engliſh phraſeology, as for a plurality of *ages* from the Greek.

With reſpect to the admiſſion of the pronouns *this* and *that*, we uſe the expreſſions *this* eternity of bliſs, or that eternity of bliſs; nor does ſuch language, being applied to a ſtate of exiſtence, expreſs the idea of limitation. The very paſſage that you have quoted (Luke xx. 35.) where αιων is rendered *world*, and admits of the pronoun *that* before it, refers to a ſtate which you yourſelf, I ſhould ſuppoſe, would allow to be endleſs.

For any thing you have hitherto alleged, the Greek words αιων and αιωνιος are no leſs expreſſive of endleſs duration, than the Engliſh words everlaſting and eternal: the latter, when applied to temporary concerns, are uſed in a figurative or improper ſenſe as frequently as the former. And if this be a truth, it muſt follow, that *the continual recurrence to them by your writers, is no better than a ſing-ſong; a mere affectation of learning, ſerving to miſlead the ignorant.*

You make much of your *rule* of interpretation, that "Where a word is uſed in relation to different things, "the ſubject itſelf muſt determine the meaning of the "word." (p. 333.) You are ſo confident that this rule is unobjectionable, as to intimate your belief, that I "ſhall

" not a second time have the temerity to reprove you for " the use of it." If you examine, you will perceive that I have not objected to it a first time yet, but rather to your manner of applying it. I shall take the liberty, however, to object to it now, whatever " temerity" it may imply. I know not who those " best critics" are, from whom you profess to have taken it, but to me it appears disrespectful to the Scriptures, and inadmissible. It supposes that all those words which are used in relation to different things (which, by the way, almost all words are) have no proper meaning of their own, and that they are to stand for nothing in the decision of any question; but are to mean any thing that the subject to which they relate can be proved to mean without them. Had you said, that the subject, including the scope of the writer, must commonly determine whether a word should be taken in a literal or in a figurative sense, that had been allowing it to have a proper meaning *of its own;* and to this I should have no objection; but to allow no meaning to a term, except what shall be imparted to it by the subject, is to reduce it to a cypher.

But exceptionable as your rule of interpretation is in itself, it is rendered much more so by your manner of applying it. If under the term " subject" you had included the scope and design of the writer, it had been so far good; but by this term you appear all along to mean, *the doctrine of future punishment abstractedly considered from what the Scriptures teach concerning it;* at least from what they teach by the terms which professedly denote its duration. You require that " there be something in the " nature of future punishment which necessarily leads us " to receive the word αιωνιος in an endless sense; in which " case (as you very properly add) it is not the *word*, but " the *subject* which gives the idea of endless duration."* What is this but saying, We are to make up our minds on the duration of future punishment from the nature and fitness of things; and having done this, we are to understand the Scripture terms which are designed to express that duration, accordingly? But if we can settle this business without the aid of those Scripture terms, why do we

* Univ. Mis. p. 329.

trouble them; and what is the meaning of all your criticisms upon them? If they are so "weak, from their "vague and undeterminate application in Scripture," that nothing certain can be gathered from them, why not let them alone? It should seem as though all your critical labour upon these terms was for the sake of imposing silence upon them.

I do not know that endless punishment can be proved from the nature of things; but neither can it be disproved. Our ideas of moral government, and of the influence of sin upon it, are too contracted to form a judgment *a priori* upon the subject. It becomes us to listen with humility and holy awe to what is revealed in the oracles of truth, and to form our judgment by it. When I suggested, that "the nature of the subject determined that "the term everlasting, when applied to future punish-"ment, was to be taken in the endless sense," I intended no more than that such is the sense in which it is used when applied to a future state.

By your rule of interpretation, I have the "temerity" to say again, you might *disprove almost any thing you please*. I observed before, that if one should attempt to prove the divinity of the Son of God, or even of the Father, from his being called *Jehovah*, your mode of reasoning would render all such evidence of no account; because the same appellation is sometimes given to an altar, &c. You reply by insisting, that you interpret this term by the *subject*. But if you interpret it as you do the term αἰων, it is not the name Jehovah that forms any part of the ground of your conclusion. You do not, on this principle, believe God to be self-existent from his being called Jehovah; but that the name Jehovah means self-existent, because it is applied to God, whom, from other considerations, you know to be a self-existent being. If Christ were called Jehovah a thousand times, you could not, *on this account*, believe him to be the true God, according to your principle; because the same word, being applied to other things, its meaning can only be determined by the *subject*; and in this case, as you say, it is not the word but the subject that gives the idea.

The rule adopted in my last letter allows a proper meaning to every Scripture term, and does not attempt

to set it aside in favour of one that is improper or figurative, unless *the scope of the passage or the nature of the subject require it.* This is a very different thing from *not admitting it, unless the subject, from its own nature, render it absolutely necessary.* The one is treating the proper meaning of a Scripture word with respect, not dispensing with it, but upon urgent necessity: the other is treating it with indignity, refusing it admission, except where it cannot be denied.

You refer me to Hab. iii. 6. as a parallel passage with Matt. xxv. 46. in which the same word is used in the same text in a different sense.* But these passages are not parallel; for there is no such antithesis in the one as in the other. It has been thought, and I apprehend is capable of being proved, that the everlasting ways or paths of God, denote those very goings forth by which he scattered the mountains, and caused the hills to bow; and that the term everlasting, in both instances, is expressive of merely limited duration. But admitting that the everlasting hills are opposed to the everlasting ways of God, or that the one were only *lasting*, and the other properly *everlasting;* still the antithesis in this case naturally directs us so to expound them; whereas in Matt. xxv. 46. it directs us to the contrary. If there be an opposition of meaning in the one case, it lies in the very term *everlasting;* or between the duration of the hills and that of the divine ways: but the opposition in the other is between *life* and *punishment*, and the adjective everlasting, is applied in common to both; which, instead of requiring a different sense to be given to it, requires the contrary. The words recorded by Matthew are parallel to those in John v. 29. *Some shall come forth to the resurrection of life, and some to the resurrection of damnation;* and we might as rationally contend for a different meaning to the term "resurrection" in the one case, as to the term "everlasting" in the other.

But besides all this, by your manner of quoting the passage, you would induce one to suppose that you had taken it merely from the *English translation*, which in a man of your pretensions, would be hardly excusable; for though the same word be twice used in the passage,

* U. M. No. xxxv. p. 331.

yet it is not in those places which you have marked as being so: the instances which you have pointed out as being the same word, are not the same, except in the *English translation.*

It was asked, Whether stronger terms could have been used concerning the duration of future punishment than those that are used? You answer, "The question ought not "to be what language God could have used, but what is "the meaning of that which he has used?"* I should have thought it had been one way of ascertaining the strength of the terms that are used, to inquire whether they be equally strong with any which the language affords? Should this be the case, it must follow, that if they do not convey the idea of endless duration, it is not in the power of language, or, at least, of that language to convey it.

You suggest a few examples, however, which in your apprehension would have been stronger, and which, if it had been the design of the Holy Spirit to teach the doctrine of endless punishment might have been used for the purpose. "I refer you (say you) to Heb. vii. 16. ακαταλ- "υτος, *endless*, say our translators. The word (you add) "is never connected in Scripture with punishment, and "but this once only with life; which however shews that "the sacred writers speak of future life in a different way "than they do of punishment." (p. 334.) It is true that the term ακαταλυτος, is here applied to *life;* but not, as you insinuate, to that life of future happiness which is opposed to punishment. The life here spoken of is that which pertains to our Lord's priesthood, which is opposed to that of Aaron, wherein men *were not suffered to continue by reason of death.* The word signifies *indissoluble;* and being applied to the nature of a priesthood which death could not *dissolve*, is very properly rendered endless. It possibly *might* be applied to the endless happiness of good men, as opposed to the *dissoluble* or transitory enjoyments of the present state; but as to the punishment of the wicked, supposing it to be endless, I question whether it be at all applicable to it. I can form no idea how the term *indissoluble*, any more than *incorruptible*, can apply to punishment. The word καταλυω, *to unloose or dissolve*, it is

* U. M. No. xxxv. p. 334.

true, is said to refer to travellers *loosing* their own burdens, or those of their beasts, when they rested by the way: but there are no examples of its being used with reference to the termination of punishment; nor does it appear to be applicable to it. In its most common acceptation in the New Testament, it signifies to *destroy* or *demolish*; and you will scarcely suppose the sacred writers to suggest the idea of a *destruction* which *cannot be destroyed.*

You offer a second example, referring me to Isai. xlv. 17. *Israel shall not be confounded, world without end:** but this is farther off still.—In the first place, The phrase is *merely English*, and therefore affords no example of "Greek," for which it is professedly introduced.—Secondly, It is not a translation from the Greek, but from the Hebrew. To have done any thing to purpose, you should have found a Greek word which might have been applied to punishment, stronger than αιωνιος: or if you must needs go to another language, you should have proved that the Hebrew words in Isai. xlv. 17. which are applied to future happiness, are stronger than the Greek word αιωνιος, which is applied to future punishment: but if you had attempted this, your criticisms might not have perfectly accorded, as they are the same words which you elsewhere tell us, would, if "literally rendered, be *agé* and *ages*;"† and therefore are properly expressive of only a limited duration. And why did you refer us to the *Old* Testament? It could not be for the want of an example to be found in the New. You know, I dare say, that the English phrase, *world without end*, occurs in Ephes. iii. 21. And are the Greek words *there* used stronger than αιων, and its derivatives? On the contrary, they are the very words made use of, and in a plural form too; εις πασας τας γενεας του αιωνος του αιωνων, *throughout all ages world without end.* Had these very terms been applied to future punishment, you would have pleaded for a different translation, and denied that they were expressive of endless duration.

Without pretending to any thing like a critical knowledge of either the Greek or Hebrew language, I can perceive, Sir, that all your arguments have hitherto been

* U. M. No. xxxv. p. 334.

† U. M. No. xxxvi. p. 364.

merely founded upon *Engliſh phraſeology;* and from your tranſlating עד and עלם *age and ages,** as though one were the ſingular, and the other the plural; and εις αιωνας αιωνων *to the age of ages*, as though one here alſo were the ſingular and the other the plural; as well as from your reference to ακαταλυτος as a proper term to be applied to endleſs puniſhment, I am furniſhed with but little inducement to retract my opinion, that you had better not have meddled with theſe ſubjects.

Yours, &c.

Kettering, March 17, 1800.

A. F.

LETTER VII.

An Examination of Mr. V.'s Syſtem and his Arguments in Support of it.

SIR,

I HAVE certainly to beg your pardon for having miſunderſtood you with reſpect to the doctrine of *annihilation*. I did not obſerve how you oppoſed the idea of endleſs puniſhment on the one hand, and annihilation on the other. In this matter I ſubmit to your correction, and readily acquit you of all thoſe abſurdities which would have followed the admiſſion of *that* principle. Other parts of that letter, however, you have but lightly touched; and ſome of them are entirely paſſed over.

As to your conjectures about my *motives*, both you and your friends might have been as well employed in ſomething elſe. I can truly ſay, that I never wrote a line in my life with a view to "raiſe a duſt" that might obſcure the truth; and it is difficult to ſuppoſe that any perſon, unleſs he himſelf had been in the habit of doing ſo, would have thought of imputing it to another.

It is my deſire to underſtand you, and not to wreſt any of your words to a meaning which they do not fairly include. I have endeavoured to collect your ſenti-

* U. M. No. xxxvi. p. 364.

ments as well as I am able. The amount of your first maxim, in page 330, appears to me to be this:—'That 'if God created men, and placed them in circumstances 'which he certainly foreknew would issue in their fall 'and ruin, he willed this their fall and ruin; and that it 'is of no importance that he forewarned them to avoid 'the evil: whatever be the event, he is chargeable with 'it. But God (you say) hath sworn by himself, that he 'willeth not the death of him who dieth; that is, he will-'eth it not as death finally or simply, or destruction irre-'coverable. If, therefore, it occur, it is a part of his 'economy of grace, and finally a ministration unto life; 'for he hath declared that it is his will that all should be 'saved: therefore the doctrine which forges any contra-'ry will, falsifies supreme unchangeable truth.'

Thus it seems you reckon, that you acquit your Creator of injustice, which must otherwise attach to his character and conduct. Let us examine this matter. It is true, that whatever exists must, in some sense, accord with the will of God. Let the blasphemer make what use he may of it, it may be asked, Who hath resisted his will? God willeth not evil, however, as evil, but permits its existence for wise ends. The good that shall arise from it, and not the evil, is the proper object of divine volition. But it is not true, that God is on this account chargeable with man's sin; that all his cautions and warnings are of no account; and that he is to be "accused" of the death of the sinner, if he die eternally. If it be, however, it is not the doctrine of universal salvation that will free him from the charge.

I am surprised, Sir, that you could allow yourself in this manner to reproach your Maker. You cannot allege all these things as merely attaching to my system. It is a fact—is it not? That God did place man in circumstances which he certainly foreknew would issue in his fall; and that he did, notwithstanding, caution and warn him against apostacy, and still continues to caution and warn sinners against those very sins which he certainly foreknows they will commit: Who then is this that dares to arraign his conduct, and to accuse him of insincerity? Who, that at one stroke, aims to sweep away the accountableness of his creatures; and to charge him with the evil of their sin, on account of his having placed them in such circumstances?

If it be as you insinuate, it must follow, That man is not blame-worthy in all his rebellion against his Maker, nor justly accountable for any of its consequences. Whether those consequences be *eternal*, makes nothing to the argument. Sin, and all the evils which follow upon it, are by you transferred from the sinner to the account of his Creator! State your supposition with reference to your own principle—'Suppose him about to create twenty men. He knows ten of them will become vicious, and consequently exposed to the tremendous penalty of damnation *for ages of ages*. Who doubts, in such a case, that he wills that penalty, who, being almighty and all-knowing, does that, without which it could not come to pass; and who will not accuse him of their damnation—having sent them into such circumstances!' Thus, Sir, you undermine the justice of *all* punishment, present and future, and every principle of moral government.

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God. Yes, says Mr. Vidler, it is he, who, "knowing all events, "and placing us in such circumstances as he does, that "is accountable! And it is of no importance in the con- "sideration of common sense, that he cautions or fore- "warns us against the evil."

If what you have suggested be true, it must also follow, that there is no need of a mediator, or of forgiving mercy. Where there is no blame, it is an insult to talk of forgiveness, or of the need of a mediator to effect a reconciliation. All that is necessary to recover man is justice. If the Creator only be accountable for the evil, it belongs to him to remedy it. Thus, instead of supporting the doctrine of universal salvation, you undermine all salvation at the very foundation.

Think not that you shall be able to roll away this reproach, which you have had the temerity to charge on your Creator, by suggesting that all the evil which follows will be ultimately a benefit; for still it follows that man has not been blame-worthy in sinning against God; that God has never been sincere in his cautions and warnings; and that, being accountable for the whole, it is but justice to man that he turn all to his ultimate advantage, as a recompense for present injury. "He sent his chil-

" dren into the wood, it seems, where he knew the poi-
" sonous fruit abounded; and though he warned them
" against it, yet he was not in earnest; and when they
" had eaten, to the endangering of their lives, he coun-
" teracted the poison; but was conscious, at the same
" time, that if there were any fault in the affair, it was
" his own; and if the children were to perish, he would
" be justly accused of their death." And can you, Sir, with these sentiments, continue to disavow your *invalidating the divine threatnings towards sinners;* and concurring with him who taught our first parents, " Ye shall not surely die?" What better exposition could the deceiver of mankind have wished for, than what your words afford! *Ye shall not surely die;* " viz. finally, or simply, or with destruction irrecoverable." *For God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened.* " If " death occur, it is a part of his economy of grace, and " finally a ministration unto life." That is, it shall prove a benefit.

" God hath sworn that he willeth not the death of him " that dieth. That is, he willeth it not as death finally, " or simply, or destruction irrecoverable." Death simply and finally, then, means irrecoverable destruction; Does it? But if it does so in this passage, it may in others; and then the threatnings of death, provided they were put in execution, may mean eternal damnation. Yea, if death in this passage mean irrecoverable destruction, it will follow that some are irrecoverably destroyed: for the death in which God taketh no pleasure, whatever it be, the sinner is supposed to suffer—He hath no pleasure in the death of *him that dieth.* God taketh no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, in the sense as *he doth not afflict willingly*, nor grieve the children of men. It does not mean that he doth *not afflict them;* for this is contrary to fact: but he doth not afflict for affliction sake, or for any pleasure that he takes in putting his creatures to pain. In all his dealings with sinners, he acts like a good magistrate who never punishes from caprice, but for a good end; in many cases for the correction of the party, and in all for the good of the community.

To your second maxim I have no objection—" That " whatever God does is intended by his goodness, con-

"ducted by his wisdom, and accomplished by his pow-
"er." But your application of it is inadmissible. Some parts of it are trifling, others rest on unfounded assumptions, and others are adapted to overthrow all future punishment.

First: The greater part of it is *mere trifling*.—Whoever supposed that eternal punishment, or any punishment, was a *benefit* to God; or even a *pleasure* to him, or any holy beings, for its own sake? Or who pretends that it is inflicted for the *honour*, *pleasure*, *or benefit* of the sinner?

Secondly: Some parts of it which object to endless punishment, because it cannot be for the *honour* of God, or the *benefit* of creatures, proceeds altogether upon *unfounded assumptions*.—The only proof you have offered for the *first* branch of this position is naked assertion; "That "every unsophisticated heart would so determine." Suppose I say, every unsophisticated heart would determine the contrary, my assertion would prove as much as your's; and I may add, if *our* hearts be sophisticated it must be by malignity, or the wish of having our fellow creatures miserable, which I imagine you will not generally impute to us. But if *your* hearts be sophisticated, it is much more easily accounted for. The decision of sinful creatures in such a case as this, is like that of a company of criminals who should sit in judgment on the nature of the penalties to which they are exposed, whose prejudices are much more likely to cause them to err on the favourable than on the unfavourable side.—The *second* branch of this position is as unsupported as the first. Only one reason is alleged, and that is far from being an acknowledged truth; viz. That no possible good can arise to society from the punishment of sinners, but that of *safety*. Common sense and universal experience teach us that this is not the only end of punishment. Israel might have been safe, if Pharaoh and his host had not been drowned; yet they were drowned. Was *safety* the only end answered to the world by the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrha; or were they not rather *set forth for an example?* Is it only for the *safety* of society that a murderer is publickly executed? That end would be equally answered by perpetual imprisonment, or banishment, or

a *private* execution; but there would be wanting an *example* to express the displeasure of a good government against crimes, and to impress the public mind with it.

Thirdly: Most of what you say on this subject, if admitted, would overturn *all* future punishment.—You might ask, Would it be honourable to God to have any of his creatures miserable *for ages of ages*, rather than happy? Would it be a greater *pleasure? Benefit* he can have none; for there is no profit in their blood.—As to the punished, future punishment can be neither honour nor pleasure to them; and if their salvation could be accomplished without it, it cannot be any benefit to them. If they may not be saved without it, it must be either because there was not efficacy enough in the blood of Christ for the purpose; or else that "the full efficacy of the atone-"ment was withheld by the divine determination."—As to *fellow creatures*, can the future punishment of any of the human race be any honour to them? Who ever thought it an honour to him, that any of his family were punished in any way? Is it not a dishonour to human nature at large to be sent to hell? Can any creature have *pleasure* in the punishment of another? Would not every benevolent mind possess a greater pleasure in seeing sinners converted and saved, without going to hell, than to see them condemned to weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, *for ages of ages?* Benefit they can have none, except *safety*; and that is better answered by their enmity being conquered in the present life. As then future torments can answer no possible good end to any one in the universe, I conclude them to be neither the work nor will of God; and consequently, not the doctrine of Scripture!

You "think there is a vast difference indeed in the "nature of future blessedness, and future punishment; "such as fully to justify us in giving a very different "sense to the word eternal, when applied to these sub-"jects." (p. 331.) It may be so; but your thoughts prove nothing. "Sin and misery (you say) have no root "or foundation in God;" and therefore must come to an end. Awhile ago they seemed to have their sole root in him, so much so as to exclude the accountableness of creatures: but allowing they have not, this inference is

a mere creature of the imagination. Reduce your argument to form, and see what it will amount to:—

Whatever has its root in the creature, must come to an end:

But sin and misery have their root in the creature:

Therefore sin and misery must come to an end.

Now what proof, I ask, have you for your major proposition? None at all. It is an argument, therefore, without any medium of proof, founded upon mere imagination. Another with equal plausibility might imagine, that as sin and misery had their origin in the present state, they will also terminate in the present state; and consequently that there will be no future punishment. And another might imagine, that as the acts of human beings are performed within a few years, the effects of them upon society cannot extend much farther; and consequently, it is absurd to suppose that a whole nation still feels the consequence of what was transacted in a few hours at Jerusalem, nearly 1800 years ago; and a whole world of what was wrought, perhaps, in less time in the garden of Eden. In short, there are no bounds to the imagination, and will be no end to its absurdities, if it go on in this direction. If instead of taking our religion from the bible, we labour to form a system from our own ideas of fitness and unfitness, and interpret the bible accordingly, there will be no end of our wanderings.

Because all judgment is committed to the Son, you conclude that future punishment has its origin in mercy, and will end in eternal salvation. To this I answer, first: If it be owing to the mediation of Christ that punishment should be a work of mercy, this is allowing, that, if no mediator had been provided, it must have been the reverse. But if so, all your arguments against eternal punishment from the divine perfections, and all your attempts to maintain that the original meaning of the divine threatenings never included this idea, are given up. —Secondly: If whatsoever is done by Christ in his mediatorial capacity shall terminate, on his delivering up the kingdom to the Father, the rewards of the righteous, as well as the punishments of the wicked, must at that period come to an end: for he will equally confer the one, as inflict the other. The "execution of judgment" com-

mitted to the Son, denotes not merely the carrying into execution the ſentence at the laſt day, but the general adminiſtration of God's moral government, both in this world and that which is to come. See Jer. xxiii. 5. xxxiii. 15. Matt. xii. 18—20.

You talk of our "aſcribing a proper eternity to ſin "and miſery," as if we conſidered ſin and miſery to be neceſſarily eternal. The exiſtence of intelligent creatures is no more eternal than their moral qualities or ſenſations; and therefore it would be improper to aſcribe eternity either to the one or the other: but if God perpetuates the exiſtence of intelligent beings to an endleſs duration, he may alſo perpetuate their moral qualities to the ſame extent; whether they originated with their exiſtence, or were acquired at any ſubſequent period. Holineſs and happineſs, in reſpect to creatures, are not neceſſarily eternal, any more than ſin and miſery; and in this view it would be as improper to aſcribe eternity to the purity and bleſſedneſs of the ſaved, as to the ſin and miſery of the loſt, ſeeing that the endleſs duration of both depends upon the will of God. You ſpeak of the "life "and bleſſedneſs of holy beings as having their root "and foundation in God; and that, being thus ground-"ed in him, they will be, like him, eternal in duration." But this poſition is contrary to fact; for was not "God the ſource and proper ſpring both of the life and bleſſedneſs" of the unſinning angels? Yet they *kept not their firſt eſtate*, but loſt their bleſſedneſs, and *are reſerved in chains of darkneſs, unto the judgment of the great day.* The life and bleſſedneſs of man in a ſtate of innocence had their origin in God, as well as thoſe of ſaints and angels; yet they were not on this account like their author, "eternal in duration." To make ſuch an aſſertion, is, "to ſay the leaſt of it, an unguarded mode of "expreſſion:" but more than this, it is contrary to fact; and tends to leſſen the dependence of creatures upon God as the conſtant author of all their happineſs. The argument to prove that ſin and miſery cannot be eternal, is the counterpart of the above poſition, and of courſe it is equally fallacious.

"Sin and miſery being contrary to the holineſs and "benevolence of God, they muſt (it ſeems) come to an

"end." Such an assertion is soon made; but where is the proof? A little more assurance might lead another to say, that sin and misery, being contrary to the holiness and benevolence of God, they cannot *exist* in a future state: and were it not for the awful evidence of facts, another might assert, that sin and misery do not *now* exist; for in theory it would be as easy to prove, that the present existence of sin and misery is as contrary to the holiness and benevolence of God, as their existence in future; and that their existence in future *for ages of ages*, is as contrary to the holiness and benevolence of God, as their existence to an endless duration. By such kind of reasoning some men have become atheists, because they cannot reconcile the present state of things with their ideas of a superintending power, possessed of infinite holiness and benevolence; and I cannot but tremble for the man who begins to travel in this unwary path, by measuring the divine administration by his own unhallowed notions of moral fitness.

If your attempts to prove that all judgment is a work of mercy, and yet that there may be *judgment without mercy*, should prove fruitless, it is no more than may be expected; for the thing itself is a contradiction. "The Scriptures afford instances of punishment and pardon to the "same persons, and for the same sins:"* but was this punishment *without mercy?* "Judgment and mercy were "united in God's dealings with Jerusalem."† Granted; but for this very reason it could not be *judgment without mercy*. You might as well allege the union of wisdom and righteousness in all the works of God, as a proof that there are some works in which wisdom will be exercised without righteousness!

In another letter, Sir, I hope to conclude these remarks. Meanwhile I am,

Your's, &c.

A. F.

* U. M. p. 337. † P. 338.

LETTER VIII.

A farther Examination of Mr. V.'s Scheme, with Replies to his Animadversions.

SIR,

I DO not know whether I fully understand your remarks on *proper eternity.* (p. 364.) It is certainly one of those ideas in which the human mind is easily lost, as it infinitely surpasses our comprehension: but whether "the scrip-"tures have revealed any thing past or to come, besides "what is connected with successive duration," and whether we be "left to infer a *proper eternity* only from the na-"ture of Deity," are other questions. You will allow that the Scriptures *attribute* a proper eternity to the Divine Being, and to his all-comprehending purposes, which I should think is not leaving us to *infer* it from his nature. They speak also of a period when *God shall be all in all*, when the *end* cometh, and of the *end of all things* being at hand. They likewise promise an inheritance that shall be *without end.* I should think, therefore, that this inheritance, of which the New Testament speaks very fully, cannot be said to be connected with successive duration; not so connected, however, as to be commensurate with it.

By successive duration being ended, I meant no more than what I apprehended you must mean by the cessation of *day and night*, (No. i. p. 8.) and the state of things when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father. Strictly speaking, it may be true that the idea of successive duration necessarily attaches, and ever will attach, to the existence of creatures, and that none but God can be said to exist without it: but there is a period, by your own acknowledgment, when the states of creatures will be forever fixed; and if at this period, sinners be doomed to everlasting punishment, the term everlasting must be understood to mean endless duration. This period I conceive to be at the last judgment; you extend it to ages beyond it. Here, therefore, is our difference. I did not allege Rev. x. 6. in favour of there being an

end of time. I did not apprehend it needed proof. Your formal anſwer to it, therefore, is only removing an objection of your own creating; and if deſigned to prove that time will have no end, it is as contrary to your own avowed principles as to mine.

You contend, that "the day of judgment is not the "finiſhing period of Chriſt's kingdom;" for which you offer a number of reaſons. To the greater part of them I have already replied. The reſt I ſhall briefly conſider:

"This earth (which is to be the hell of wicked men, "2 Pet. iii. 7—13) is to be renewed, whereby hell itſelf "will be no more."* If this gloſs will bear the teſt, you have certainly for once hit upon a clear proof of your point; for none can imagine the conflagration to be eternal. But, firſt: The Scriptures ſpeak of a hell *already exiſting*, wherein the angels who kept not their firſt eſtate are *reſerved in everlaſting chains, under darkneſs, unto the judgment of the great day;* and in which the departed ſpirits of wicked men *lift up their eyes, being in torment;* and intimate that this, whatſoever and wherever it be, will be the hell of ungodly men: for they are doomed to depart into everlaſting fire, *prepared for the devil and his angels.* But this cannot be upon earth, as its preſent condition does not admit of it.

Secondly: If the earth, as being diſſolved by fire, is to be the hell of ungodly men, their puniſhment muſt *precede* the day of judgment, inſtead of following it; for the conflagration is uniformly repreſented as prior to that event. It is deſcribed, not as your ſcheme ſuppoſes, as taking place a thouſand years after Chriſt's ſecond coming, but as attending it. The *day of the Lord's coming*, is the ſame as the *day of God*, which Chriſtians look for and haſten to; WHEREIN *the heavens, being on fire, ſhall be diſſolved—Our God ſhall come and ſhall not keep ſilence; a fire ſhall devour before him, and it ſhall be very tempeſtuous round about him;* and all this previous to his giving orders for his ſaints to be *gathered unto him.* And thus we are taught by the apoſtle Paul, that *the Lord Jeſus ſhall be revealed from heaven* IN FLAMING FIRE.†

* U. M. No. xxxvi. p. 365.

† 2 Pet. iii. 7, 12, 13. Pſalm l. 2 Theſſ. i. 7, 8.

Thirdly: I appeal to the judgment of the impartial reader, whether, by the *perdition* of ungodly men, be not meant the destruction of their *lives*, and not of their *souls?* It is spoken of in connexion with the deluge, and intimated that as the ungodly were then destroyed from the face of the earth by water, in like manner they should now be destroyed by fire.

You plead the promise, that "every knee shall bow to "Christ," and consider this as inconsistent with a "stub-"born knee even in hell." But the question is, Whether the bowing of the knee to Christ be necessarily expressive of a *voluntary* and *holy* submission to him? The same inspired writer applies the language to that universal conviction which shall be produced at the last judgment, when every mouth will be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. *We shall all stand* (saith he) *before the judgment seat of Christ: for it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.** But you will not pretend that every knee will *in that day* bow to Christ in a way of voluntary submission.

"All things (you allege) are to be reconciled to the "Father by the blood of the cross: but while any con-"tinue in enmity against God, this can never be perform-"ed." (p. 364.) You refer, I suppose, to Col. i. 19, 20. But if the reconciliation of things in earth, and things in heaven denote the salvation of all the inhabitants of heaven and earth, it would follow: (1.) That the holy angels are *saved*, as well as the unholy, though in fact they never sinned. (2.) That when the apostle adds, *And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled*, he deals in unmeaning tautology. Things in heaven, and things in earth, were at variance through sin. Men becoming the enemies of God, all his faithful subjects, and all the works of his hands, were at war with them; yea, they were at variance with each other. But through the blood of Christ, all things are reconciled; and under his headship, all made to subserve the present and everlasting good of those who believe in him. Such appears to me

* Rom. xiv. 10—12.

to be the meaning of the paſſage, and which involves neither of the foregoing abſurdities.

"Chriſt, (you add) is to rule till his enemies are *ſubdued;* till there be no authority, power, or dominion, "but what ſhall be ſubſervient to him; till death the laſt "enemy ſhall be deſtroyed: and as the wages of ſin is "death, the ſecond death muſt be here included." (p. 365.) This language, which is taken from 1 Cor. xv. is manifeſtly uſed in reference to the reſurrection of the bodies of thoſe that ſleep in Jeſus, which is an event that precedes the laſt judgment: for WHEN *this corruptible ſhall have put on incorruption*—THEN *ſhall be brought to paſs the ſaying that is written, Death is ſwallowed up in victory;* which is the ſame thing as *the laſt enemy being deſtroyed.* And THEN *cometh the end*, the laſt judgment, and the winding up of all things, WHEN *he ſhall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he ſhall have put down all rule, and authority, and power.* (ver. 24, 25.) For you to interpret this language of things that are to *follow the laſt judgment*, and to ſay that it *muſt* include the ſecond death, proves nothing but the dire neceſſity to which your ſyſtem reduces you.

"Finally: The character of God is LOVE—which is "expreſsly againſt the horrible idea of the endleſs miſery "of any of his rational creatures." (p. 395.) So, Sir, you are pleaſed to aſſert. Another might from the ſame premiſes aſſert, that the puniſhment of any of his rational creatures in hell for ages of ages, where there ſhall be weeping and wailing and gnaſhing of teeth, and this notwithſtanding the death of his Son, and the omnipotence of his grace, which ſurely was able to have ſaved them from it, is horrible and incredible! Is it inconſiſtent with the benevolence of a ſupreme magiſtrate that he dooms certain characters to death? Rather, is it not an exerciſe of his benevolence? Should a malefactor perſuade himſelf and his companions in guilt, that his majeſty cannot poſſibly conſent to their execution, without ceaſing to be that lovely and good character for which he has been famed, would not his reaſoning be as falſe in itſelf as it was injurious to the king? Nay; would it not be inimical to his own intereſt, and that of his fellow criminals; as, by raiſing a deluſive hope, they are prevented from mak-

ing a proper and timely application to the throne for mercy?

Such are your reasons for successive duration, and final salvation, after the last judgment; which, whether they ought to satisfy any other person, let the reader judge. I shall close with replies to a few of your animadversions.

Your misrepresentation of what I had advanced concerning the Jews as a distinct nation, I should hope needs no correction. If any of your readers can mistake what you have said, for a just statement of the views, or an answer to the argument of your opponent, they are beyond the reach of reasoning.

You inferred from what was God's end in punishing Israel *in the present life*, that (seeing he was an *immutable* being) it must be the same in his punishing others in the life to come.* I answered, That I might as well infer from what appears to be his end in punishing Pharaoh and Sodom *in the present life*, which was not their good, but the good of others, that such will be the end of future punishment.† You reply, by *supposing* that these characters were destroyed for their good. (p. 367.) What, *in the present life?* No; but in the life to come! And do you call this reasoning?

You say, "If any be finally incorrigible, it must be in "consequence of the divine purpose; or else the purpose "of God has been frustrated." I have in my last letter replied to the substance of this dilemma. I may add, you need be under no apprehension that I shall be tempted to give up the infrustrableness of the divine purpose; and if I admit that God in just judgment has purposed to give some men up to stumble, and fall, and perish, it is no more than the Scriptures abundantly teach. You talk of "the LAST state of a creature according with the "divine purpose:" but I know of no evidence for this, which does not equally apply to *every state*. If you be tempted to ask, *Why doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will?* You may possibly recollect that these questions have been asked before, and answered too; and it may be of use to you to study the answer.

Akin to this is your dilemma, "That God cannot, or "will not, make an end of sin; that there is not efficacy

* U. M. No. ii. p. 43, 44. † No. xxxiii. p. 262.

" enough in the blood of Chriſt to deſtroy the works of " the devil ; or elſe that the full efficacy of the atonement " is withheld by the divine determination." It has been already obſerved, and I hope proved, that the Scripture phraſes, *making an end of ſin, &c.* convey no ſuch idea as you attach to them. (p. 264.) And as to your dilemma, to which you aſcribe great "weight," I anſwer again, you need be under no apprehenſion of my limiting the power of God, or the efficacy of the Saviour's blood ; and if I ſay that both the one and the other are applied under the limitations of his own infinite wiſdom, I ſay not only what the Scriptures abundantly teach, but what you yourſelf muſt admit. Can you pretend that your ſcheme repreſents God as doing all he can do, and as beſtowing all the mercy which the efficacy of the Saviour's blood hath rendered conſiſtent ? If ſo, you muſt believe that God cannot convert more than he actually does in the preſent life, and that the efficacy of the blood of Chriſt is not equal to the ſaving of more than a part of mankind from the ſecond death.

You think that " the Scripture is not ſilent concern- " ing the future emendation of the ancient Sodomites ;" and refer me to Ezek. xvi. 44—63 ; arguing, that " Sodom and her daughters muſt be taken literally for " the city of Sodom, and the neighbouring cities of the " plain—that the prophecy muſt refer to the very perſons " who were deſtroyed, ſeeing they left no deſcendants— " and that there is the ſame reaſon to expect the reſtora- " tion of Sodom, as the fulfilment of God's gracious " promiſes towards Jeruſalem." (p. 368.) But if your interpretation prove any thing, it will prove—I will not ſay, too much, but too little. It will prove, not that the ancient Sodomites will be ſaved from "the vengeance of " eternal fire," and introduced into the heavenly world ; but barely that they are to return *to their former eſtate.* (ver. 55.) And do you ſeriouſly think, that *after the laſt judgment*, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha, of Samaria and Jeruſalem, will be rebuilt, and repoſſeſſed by their ancient inhabitants ? If ſo, it is time for me to lay down my pen.

The former part of the above paſſage, (ver. 46—59.) I apprehend to be no promiſe ; but the language of keen

reproof: and instead of intimating a return to either Sodom or Jerusalem, the latter is reasoned with on the footing of her own deserts, and told in effect not to expect it any more than the former.* The latter part (ver. 60—63.) contains the language of free mercy; not however towards the same individuals, against whom the threatenings are directed, but to their distant posterity, who under the gospel dispensation should be brought home to God; and by a new and better *covenant*, have the *gentiles* given to them. The conversion of the heathen is expressed by this kind of language more than once; as by *bringing again the captivity of Moab, of Elam, and of the children of Ammon in the latter days.* Jer. xlviii. 47. xlix. 6, 39.

You "have not discernment enough, it seems, to per-"ceive the gross absurdity" of maintaining that there can be no diversity in future punishment, unless it be in duration; that is, that the reflections of sinners on their past life must all be exactly the same. It may be so; but I cannot help it. Your answer amounts to this: Diversity of degrees in future punishment *may* be accounted for by varying the duration of it; "for every "one knows there needs not so much time to inflict a "hundred stripes, as to inflict ten times that number." Therefore that *must* be the way, and the *only* way; and if you do not admit it, you "confound all degrees of pun-"ishment, in giving infinite punishment to all." (p. 42, 264, 369.)

You believe, you say, that "*those who die in their sins* "*cannot go where Christ is.*" You must mean to say merely, that they *cannot follow him* NOW, *but shall follow him* AFTERWARDS. Such things, indeed, are said of Christ's friends, but not of his enemies.

You have represented me as maintaining that all punishment clashes with the benevolence "both of God and "his people." I have said no such thing concerning God; and if we were equally wise and righteous, and equally concerned to guard the interests of the universe, as he is, we should be in all respects of the same mind with him. The misery which I suppose true be-

* See a similar kind of phraseology in Jer. xxxiii. 19—26.

nevolence to clash with, is misery inflicted for its own sake; and to this, whether it be temporary or endless, it is alike abhorrent. God has also made it *our* duty, while sinners are not his confirmed enemies, to do all in our power to preserve their lives, and save their souls; but *He* is not obliged to do all that he can to these ends, nor does he. Temporary punishment, you contend, may consist with benevolence, "because it is directed to a "good and glorious end:" And do I contend for endless punishment on any other principle? If you can form no idea of an end that is good and glorious, save that which respects "the amendment of the sufferer," it does not follow that no such end exists. A murderer, contemplating his approaching exit, might be so much absorbed in the love of himself as to be of your opinion; but the community would not.

Whether I have entered into "the merits of the cause," or conducted the controversy in a becoming "spirit," I consider as no part of my province to determine. The impartial reader will judge, whether I have dealt in "soft words, or hard arguments;" and if I have been so happy as in this particular to follow your counsel, whether I have not been obliged to deviate from your example. On this account I shall be excused from taking any notice of your animadversions on these subjects, together with those of your new ally, the "Hoxton Student," unless it be to thank you for affording additional proof of the justness of my remark, *That Socinians rejoice in the spread of Universalism.*

Whether the kingdom of heaven be prepared for all men, or not, that you and I may so agonize in the present life, as at last to enter in, is the desire and prayer of your sincere well-wisher,

A. F.

FINIS.

THREE

OCCASIONAL SERMONS.

I.—On the Common Salvation.

II.—The good Man's Desire for the Success of God's Cause.

III.—The Object and Encouragement of Believers in praying for Spiritual Might.

To which are added,

TWO LETTERS,

On the Sickneſs and Death of a Chriſtian Friend.

BY ANDREW FULLER, D. D.

BOSTON:

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Sermon I.

JUDE 3.

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

THE writer of this epistle was him who in the gospel is called *Judas not Iscariot*. The epistle itself is called *general*, not being addressed to any particular person or people; and may therefore be of more common concern. In the passage I have read we may notice, First, The *occasion* there was for writing: *it was needful*. The apostle did not write for writing sake; but to guard them against *certain men* who had crept into the churches *unawares—turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.* (ver. 4.) —Secondly, The *earnestness* with which he engaged in it: He *gave all diligence*. The word* signifies haste, forwardness, diligent care; somewhat like that which a parent would feel in pulling a child out of the fire. (ver. 23.)— Thirdly, The *subject* on which he wrote: *the common salvation*. This furnishes a reason for his being so much in earnest: the very vitals of christianity were struck at. Had not this been the case, it may be they would not have heard from him. When Haman had conspired against the Jews in Persia, you recollect the petition of Esther, and the manner in which it was addressed to the king. After inviting him to her banquet, and postponing the matter till she had whetted his desire to the uttermost, she at length uttered her request: *If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my* LIFE *be given me at my petition, and my* PEOPLE *at my re-*

* σπουδη.

queſt! For we are ſold, I and my people, to be deſtroyed, to be ſlain, and to periſh: but if we had been ſold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my peace, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage! Something like this ſeems to be the ſpirit of this paſſage. It is as if the writer had ſaid, If the enemy had levelled his weapon againſt any thing but the very heart of the goſpel, I might have held my peace.

The amount is: THE COMMON DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL ARE OF THE FIRST IMPORTANCE TO BE TAUGHT BY US AS MINISTERS, AND RETAINED BY US AS CHRISTIANS.

In diſcourſing on the ſubject, I ſhall endeavour to aſcertain wherein the common ſalvation conſiſts; inquire why it is ſo called; and ſhew the importance of its being made the grand theme of our miniſtrations, and the firſt object of our attachment.

I. Let us endeavour to aſcertain wherein the common ſalvation conſiſts.

There can be no doubt, I think, that by this phraſe is meant the goſpel ſalvation. It is the ſame thing as *the faith once delivered to the ſaints: the common faith*, after which Titus is ſaid to have been begotten.* In a word, it is that which in the New Teſtament is peculiarly denominated *the goſpel.*

But the queſtion returns: What is the goſpel? Great diverſity of opinion prevails on this ſubject. One denomination of profeſſing chriſtians tell you it is one thing, and another, another; and how ſhall we judge amidſt ſuch diſcordant accounts? If I were to tell you that ſuch and ſuch doctrines conſtitute the goſpel, you might anſwer, This is only my opinion, which is ſubject to error, equally with that of other people. For this reaſon I ſhall not attempt to ſpecify particulars, but mention certain ſcriptural mediums by which you yourſelves may judge of it.

Firſt: We may form a judgment wherein the goſpel conſiſts, by the *brief deſcriptions* which are given of it.—The New Teſtament abounds with theſe deſcriptions: it delights in epitome. For example: *God ſo loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever be-*

* Titus i. 4.

lieveth in him ſhould not periſh but have everlaſting life. This is the common ſalvation: and ſurely I need not aſk whether the doctrine which denies the *periſhing* condition of ſinners by nature, and ſuppoſes the unſpeakable *gift* of heaven to be a mere fellow-creature, ſent only to inſtruct us, and to ſet us a good example, can comport with this repreſentation.—Again: *The Jews require a ſign*, or miracle, *and the Greeks ſeek after wiſdom: but we preach Chriſt crucified, unto the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Chriſt the power of God, and the wiſdom of God.* This is the common ſalvation. We hear of preachers knowing their auditors, and preaching accordingly: but Paul went ſtraight forward, regardleſs of the deſires of men.—Again; *I determined not to know any thing among you but Jeſus Chriſt and him crucified.* In each of theſe paſſages, the goſpel is ſuppoſed to be ſummarily comprehended in what relates to the perſon and work of Chriſt. This is the foundation which God hath laid in Zion: this is the common ſalvation.—Again; *I declare unto you the goſpel which I preached unto you, which alſo ye have received, and wherein ye ſtand; by which alſo ye are ſaved, if ye keep in memory*, or hold faſt, *what I preached unto you, unleſs ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you firſt of all, that which I alſo received, how that Chriſt died for our ſins according to the ſcriptures: and that he was buried, and that he roſe again the third day, according to the ſcriptures.* Here alſo we ſee what is *the goſpel*, and what that is on which the *preſent ſtanding*, and *final ſalvation* of chriſtians depend: and I appeal to every thing that is candid and impartial in my hearers, whether ſuch importance can be attached to the death, burial, and reſurrection of Chriſt upon any other principle than that of his dying in our ſtead, and riſing again as our forerunner?—Finally; *This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners, of whom I am chief.** This language ſuppoſes, that in coming into the world, our Lord was *voluntary*, or that it was with *deſign*, which ſuppoſes his pre-exiſtence; and that this deſign was to *ſave ſinners, the chief of ſinners.* In calling it a faithful or true *ſaying*, it is intimated that it was ſo much

* John iii. 16. 1 Cor. i. 22—24. 1 Cor. ii. 4. 1 Cor. xv. 1—4. 1 Tim. i. 15.

the theme of the apoſtle's miniſtry, and ſo well known amongſt chriſtians, as to become proverbial. *A ſaying grown into credit by experience of its truth,* is the definition which has been given of a proverb; and ſuch was the true ſaying of Paul. This therefore muſt be the goſpel —the common ſalvation.

Secondly: We may judge wherein the common ſalvation conſiſts, by the *brief deſcriptions which are given of the faith of primitive chriſtians.* This, as well as the goſpel, is frequently epitomized in the New Teſtament; and it may be expected that the one will agree with the other. *So* we preach, and *ſo* ye believed. The creed of the firſt believers, it has often been remarked, was very ſimple. *I believe that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God—Whoſoever believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt, is born of God—Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jeſus is the Son of God?* Believing is called *receiving the witneſs,* or record, *of God—And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.** There are many other important truths, no doubt, the belief of which is neceſſary to ſalvation; ſuch as, the being and perfections of God, the evil of ſin, &c.; but they are all involved in the doctrine of *Chriſt and him crucified.* This all-important principle is a golden link, which if laid hold of, draws with it the whole train of evangelical truth. Let a man cordially embrace this, and you may truſt him or the reſt.

There are, I conceive, four things which eſſentially belong to the common ſalvation; its *neceſſity,* its *vicarious medium,* its *freeneſs* to the chief of ſinners, and its *holy efficacy.* If we doubt whether we ſtand in need of ſalvation, or overlook the atonement, or hope for an intereſt in it any otherwiſe than as unworthy, or reſt in a mere ſpeculative opinion which has no effectual influence on our ſpirit and conduct, we are at preſent unbelievers, and have every thing to learn.

II. Inquire wherefore it is called the common ſalvation?

Three reaſons may perhaps be aſſigned for this.

Firſt: It is that in which *all the ſacred writers,* notwithſtanding their diverſity of ages and gifts, *are agreed in*

* Acts viii. 37. John v. 1, 5, 9, 11.

teaching. The Old Teſtament writers underſtood it much leſs than the New; but they all *died in the faith of it.* They *teſtified of the ſufferings of Chriſt, and of the glory that ſhould follow—To him give all the prophets witneſs.* The New Teſtament writers differed widely as to talents. *Paul* reaſoned; but Chriſt and him crucified was his theme. *John* had more of the affectionate: he was baptized, as it were, in love; but the Lamb that was ſlain was the great object of it. There is no other name, ſaid *Peter*, given under heaven, or among men, whereby we muſt be ſaved; and John ſtood by his ſide and aſſented. If any of the New Teſtament writers could be ſuppoſed to diſſent, it would be *James*, who wrote fully upon the neceſſity of good works: but he was of the ſame *faith*, and only pleaded for *ſhewing it* by his works.

Secondly: It is that which is *addreſſed to ſinners in common*, without diſtinction of character or nation. The meſſages of grace under the Old Teſtament were principally addreſſed to a ſingle nation: but under the goſpel they are addreſſed to all nations, to every creature. The promiſes of mercy are indeed made only to believers; but its invitations are addreſſed to ſinners. The goſpel feaſt is ſpread, and all are preſſed to partake of it, whatever has been their previous character.

Thirdly: It is that in which *all believers*, notwithſtanding their different attainments and advantages, *are in ſubſtance agreed.* It is fitly compared to milk, which is the natural food of children. There may be great darkneſs, imperfections, and error; and many prejudices for and againſt diſtinctive names: but let the doctrine of the Croſs be ſtated ſimply, and it muſt approve itſelf to a renewed heart. A real chriſtian cannot object to either of thoſe four things which were conſidered as belonging to the common ſalvation:—to the neceſſity of it, the vicarious medium of it, the freeneſs of it, or the holy efficacy of it.

III. Shew the importance of its being the grand theme of our miniſtrations, and the firſt object of our attachment.

It is that which God hath ever bleſſed to the ſalvation of ſinners, and the edification of believers—The primitive chriſtians lived upon it—Times of great revival in the church have always been diſtinguiſhed by a warm

adherence to it. In the dark ages of popery, the schoolmen, as they are called, employed themselves in deciding curious points; but at the time of the reformation, the common salvation was the leading theme. Those ministers whose labours have been more abundantly owned for the promotion of true religion, have been distinguished by their attachment to the common truth; and those churches which have abounded the most in vital and practical godliness are such as have not descended to curious researches, nor confined their approbation to elegant preaching, but have loved and lived upon the truth, from whomsoever it has proceeded.

There are three things in particular from which we are in danger of neglecting the common salvation, both as preachers and as hearers:—

First: A pretended regard to *moral and practical preaching*, to the disregard of *evangelical principle*. All preaching, no doubt, ought to be practical; and there are no greater enemies to the Cross of Christ than men who can bear nothing but what soothes and comforts them: but this is not the only extreme. Almost all the adversaries of evangelical truth endeavour to cover their dislike to it under an apparent zeal for 'morality, the christian temper, and christian practice.' If we neglect the common salvation in our ordinary labours, morality will freeze upon our lips, and neither the preacher nor the hearer be much inclined to practise it. To lose a relish for the common salvation is the first step towards giving it up; and the effects of this we are warned against from the example of *the angels who kept not their first estate.*

Secondly: The *love of novelty.*—Both preachers and hearers are in danger of making light of common truths, and of indulging in a spirit of curious speculation. This will render preaching rather an entertainment, than a benefit to the soul. We are commanded to *feed* the church of God . . . . not their fancies, or imaginations, nor merely their understandings; but their renewed minds. It indicates a vicious taste, and affords a manifest proof of degeneracy, where the common salvation is slighted, and matters of refinement eagerly pursued. The doctrine of Christ crucified is full of the wisdom of God, and will furnish materials for the strongest powers; and here we

may dig deep in our researches: but if this subject has no charms for us, what are we to do in heaven, where it is their darling theme?

Thirdly: A partial attachment to *one or two particular truths*, to the neglect of *the great body of truth*. It has frequently been the case, that some one particular topic has formed the character of an age or generation of men; and this topic has been hackneyed in almost every place, till the public mind has become weary of it; while other things of equal importance have been overlooked. Beauty consists in lovely proportion: and herein consists the holy beauty of religion. When every part of truth has its due regard, and every part of holiness its share in our affections, then will the *beauty of Jehovah our God be upon us*, and then will he *establish the work of our hands*.

Finally: The common salvation, though it affords ground for a universal application for mercy, yet will be of no essential benefit to us, unless it be specially embraced. Notwithstanding the indefiniteness of gospel invitations, it is nevertheless true, that, *He who believeth and is baptized, shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned!*

Sermon II.

PSALM XC. 16, 17.

Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us: yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

IN every undertaking we have an end or ends to answer, to which all our labours are directed. It is no less so in religious undertakings than in others; and as these are pure, and worthy of pursuit, such is the good or evil of our exertions. What are, or at least should be, the great ends of a christian congregation in rearing a place for divine worship? What are the main desires of serious people amongst you now it is reared? If I mistake not, they are depicted in the passage I have read:—That *God's work may appear amongst you in your own time*—that *it may be continued to posterity*—that God would *beautify you with salvation*—and *prosper the work of your hands?*

The psalm was written by Moses, probably on occasion of the sentence of mortality passed upon the generation of Israelites which came out of Egypt, on account of their unbelief, as recorded in the xixth chapter of Numbers. It was a heavy sentence, and very affectingly lamented by the holy man; but he discovers a greater concern for the cause of God, than for the loss of temporal comfort. He prays that they may be taught to make such a use of this awful providence as to *apply their hearts unto wisdom;* and that however God might afflict them during forty years wandering in the wilderness, he would bless them with spiritual prosperity.

This prayer was answered. That generation which was trained in the wilderness was, perhaps, the best that Israel exhibited during their existence as a nation. It was of them that the Lord himself spake, saying, *I re-*

member thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel then was holiness to the Lord. May our prayer for the prosperity of God's cause amongst us be thus answered.

All I shall attempt will be, to review the *objects* desired, and shew the *desirableness* of them.

The objects desired, though expressed by the Jewish lawgiver, have nothing in them peculiar to that dispensation; but are equally suited to our times, as to others. They prove that the cause of God is one, through every dispensation, and is directed to one great end—the establishment of truth and righteousness in the earth.

The *first* branch of this comprehensive petition is, That *God's work might appear unto his servants.* All God's works are great. Creation is full of his glory: providence is no less so: and each is sought out by them that have pleasure therein. But it is evident that by the work of God, in this connexion, is meant the operation of his *grace.* When the Almighty took Israel to be his people, he bestowed blessings upon them of two kinds; temporal and spiritual. He gave them the promise of a good land, and of great prosperity in case of their obedience to his will. But this was not all: he set up his cause amongst them. They were his visible people, by whom true religion was practised, and its interests promoted. It was the carrying on of this cause that is here intended. It was begun from the time when God made promise to Abraham their grand progenitor, and was carried on during the lives of the patriarchs. When they were brought out of Egypt with a high hand, and formed into a people for himself, it became more apparent, and wore a more promising aspect; but when they were doomed to die in the wilderness, it seemed as if it must sink. Hence Moses, who was tenderly affected with what concerned the honour of God, pleads as he does. Thus he pleaded his *great name* on a former occasion: and thus the prophet Habakkuk pleaded when Judah was going into captivity, and the cause of God was likely to be ruined: *O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make known: in wrath remember mercy!*

The work of God may be said to *appear amongst us* when sinners are converted to himself. Conversion is not confined to Jews and heathens; but extends to sinners of all ages and nations. It is not enough that we are born and educated under the light of revelation, nor that we yield a traditional assent to it. Nicodemus could boast of all this, and more: yet he was told by the faithful and true witness, that *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven.* Conversion work is peculiarly the *work of God.* Ministers and parents may be the instruments; but God is the proper cause of it. None but he who made the heart of man can turn it from its rooted aversion to the love of himself. Ministers and parents know this by painful experience; and therefore can each adopt the prayer here presented as their own. Wherever this work is, it will *appear* by its holy and happy effects. The drunkard will become sober, the churl liberal, the unclean chaste, and the malignant persecutor of Christ's people a humble sufferer for his name's sake.

The work of God will also appear amongst us if christians grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The power of divine grace is no less apparent in the carrying on of God's work, than in the beginning of it. Nothing short of an almighty arm can preserve creatures, so prone to fall away, *from falling*, and present those who are so faulty, *faultless before the presence of his glory.* And where this part of the work is, it will *appear* also by its holy and happy effects. Such christians bear the most impressive testimony to the world of the reality and importance of religion.

A *second* branch of the petition is, That God's work might so appear as that there might be an illustrious display of his *glory.* All God's works display his glory; but the work of grace in the salvation of sinners most of all. Other things manifest his wisdom and power; but this his holy nature. The carrying on of his cause in the world, by the conversion and sanctification of sinners, gives a kind of visibility to the divine character. It is seen, and even felt by the most abandoned of men. God is said to have *appeared in his glory in building up Zion*, after it had been broken down by the Chaldeans. Even the heathen, when they saw what he

had wrought, could not forbear to acknowledge, *The Lord hath done great things for them!* But the building up of the goſpel church, by turning the captivity of thoſe who were the ſlaves of Satan, is ſtill more glorious. The Lord could accompliſh the former merely by his providence; but the latter is the effect of the travail of his ſoul.

It is requeſted, *thirdly*, That God would impart to them his beauty: *Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us!* All God's works are beautiful; but ſaints who are his workmanſhip, are the ſubjects of a *holy* beauty, or of the beauty of holineſs. They are comely through the comelineſs which he puts upon them. Conceive of the camp of Iſrael after they had been humbled, and taught to fear the Lord their God. Two or three hundred thouſand godly young people, following him implicitly in the wilderneſs, and trembling at the idea of repeating the iniquities of their fathers! This was a ſight at which even a wicked prophet was ſtruck with awe, and could not forbear exclaiming, *How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Iſrael!* Powerful are the charms of genuine piety. There is ſomething in it that diſarms malignity itſelf, and extorts admiration even from thoſe who hate it. Milton repreſents the devil himſelf, on his approaching paradiſe, as awed by innocence, as ſtaggered, as half inclined to deſiſt from his purpoſe, and feeling a kind of perturbation within him compoſed of malignity and pity. Something like this, exiſted, methinks, in Balaam. He wanders from hill to mountain, ſeeking for curſes, but ſcattering bleſſings; ſometimes half inclined to unite with God, and concluding with a vain deſire to die the death of the righteous. Powerful, I repeat it, are the charms of genuine piety. Conceive of a ſociety of chriſtians drinking into the ſpirit of Chriſt, and walking according to his commandments. What an amiable ſight! *Beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jeruſalem, and terrible as an army with banners!* So much as we poſſeſs of the ſpirit of true religion, ſo near as we approach its original ſimplicity, ſo far as our doctrine is incorrupt, our diſcipline pure and impartial, and our converſation as becometh the goſpel, ſo much of *the beauty of the Lord our God is upon us.*

A *fourth* branch of the petition is, That God would set his seal to their undertakings, and establish the work of their hands: *Establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.*—It was the work of Moses and Joshua, and the rest of God's servants, to mould and form the people, especially the rising generation; to instruct them in the words of the Lord, and impress their hearts with the vast importance of obeying them. And this has been the work of God's servants in every age. This is our object in our stated and occasional labours, in village-preaching, and in foreign missions; this is the object in the present undertaking: but all is nothing unless God establish the work of our hands. Except the Lord build the house, the builders labour in vain. As we must never confide in God to the neglect of means; so we must never engage in the use of means without a sense of our dependence on God.

Finally: It is requested that these blessings might appear both in their own times, and be continued to their posterity: *Let thy work appear unto thy servants*, who are now alive, *and thy glory unto their children*, when they are no more. It is desirable that true religion should be promoted *in our time*. This indeed should be our first and chief concern. Worldly men may care nothing about this. If they gain but the corn, the wine, and the oil, it is enough for them, but God's *servants* cannot be happy with mere temporal prosperity, if the interest of Christ do not prosper. Nehemiah might have lived in affluence at the court of Persia; but he could not enjoy it while the city of his God was going to ruins. The true labourers in God's husbandry long to see it abound in fruits: the builders of his temple desire to see it rise. And though our own times lie nearest us, yet our prayers and efforts must not be confined to them, but extend to *posterity*. The succeeding generation should lie near our hearts. In them we hope for materials for God's building. The prayer of David would fit the lips of every godly man, and especially of every godly parent: *That our sons may be as olive-plants grown up in their youth; and our daughters as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace!*

I ſhall add a few words on the deſirableneſs of the objects.

We have ſeen already that the manifeſtation of the *glory* of God depends on the progreſs of his *work*: by how much, therefore, we are concerned for the one, by ſo much ſhall we be importunate for the other. It is for the glory of God, that Satan's kingdom ſhould be overturned, and the kingdom of his Son eſtabliſhed on its ruins. This work is the *harveſt* of all God's other works of glory. It was glorious in him to promiſe to give his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermoſt parts of the earth for his poſſeſſion: but the glory of this alſo depends upon its being performed. It was glorious for Chriſt to die, that he might purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works: but it is by the actual accompliſhment of this object that his glory is perfected. It was glorious for God in his providence to drive out paganiſm and popery from this kingdom: but if it ſtop here, what are we the better? The cutting down of weeds will be of but little uſe, if the pure ſeed be not ſown, and ſpring up, and bring forth fruit in their place.

The progreſs of God's work in heathen countries has a cloſe connexion alſo with our ſpiritual proſperity at home. There is much beauty and propriety in the petitions offered up in the lxviiith Pſalm. *God be merciful unto* us —THAT *thy way may be known upon earth, thy ſaving health among all nations!* God bleſſeth the world by bleſſing the church, and making it a bleſſing. A ſtateſman would wiſh for an increaſe in population, that the army, and navy, and every other department of ſociety might be filled: and ſhall not we pray for the proſperity of the church of God; that faithful miniſters, miſſionaries and every other deſcription of chriſtians, may not be wanting?

Finally: The regard we bear to the ſouls of men, eſpecially to the riſing generation, muſt render theſe bleſſings deſirable. It is not your's, but you that we ſeek. Our hearts' deſire, and prayer to God for you, is, that you may be ſaved. If we recommend you to attend the goſpel and embrace it, Is it becauſe we want to enliſt you under the banner of a party? God knoweth! Yet we ſhall ſay to you, and eſpecially to the riſing generation, *Go with us, and we will do you good; for the Lord*, we truſt, *hath ſpoken good concerning us: and it ſhall come to paſs that whatſoever good thing the Lord ſhall do unto us, that will we do unto you.*

Sermon III.

EPHESIANS iii. 14—16.

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . . . that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might, by his Spirit, in the inner man.

THE writing and preaching of the apostles had two distinct specific objects in view. They *preached*, to make men christians; to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the living God: They *wrote*, to make them eminent christians; to quicken believers in their heavenly race, to promote in them a growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Such was the zeal of Paul in endeavouring to accomplish the former, that he counted not his life dear to him, but was willing to die for the name of the Lord Jesus: nor was he less desirous of the latter; making it the leading object of all his epistles, and the matter of his prayer day and night. In the apostle's words there are three things which require our notice: The object desired—its importance—and the encouragement we have to seek it.

I. The *object* in which the apostle was so much interested on behalf of the Ephesians: *That he would grant you to be strengthened with might, by his Spirit, in the inner man.*

Nothing good is found in fallen man; nothing grows spontaneously in that soil but what is evil: if any thing holy be found there, it must be produced by the Spirit of God, who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Nor is divine influence less necessary in carrying on the good work after it is begun: such is our proneness to relax, to grow weary, to faint in our course, that we need to be continually strengthened with might, by his Spirit, in the inner man.

The object prayed for is not *bodily* ſtrength; that is of but little account in the ſight of God, though in many caſes it becomes the matter of human boaſting. Sampſon was poſſeſſed of might in the outward man to a high degree, and a poor uſe he made of it. Perhaps a more feeble character is not to be met with among thoſe whom the ſcriptures mention as good men: with all his wonderful exploits, he weakly yielded to the tempter, and became an eaſy prey to his enemies. Nor is it mere *mental* ability that is here intended; that was the ſtrength of Solomon. Paul did not pray that we might be made great men, but good men; not that we might be poets or philoſophers, but chriſtians; not that we might excel in genius or learning, but in grace and goodneſs; that our ſouls may proſper and be in health—that we may be ſtrengthened with might in the inner man. This part of the ſubject will be better underſtood by conſidering ſome of the ſymptoms of ſpiritual might.

1. The manner in which we perform *religious duties* may ſerve as a criterion by which to judge of our ſtrength or weakneſs.—If we be chriſtians, we ſhall worſhip God in our families and in ſecret; ſhall ſearch the ſcriptures, frequent the houſe of God, and aim to diſcharge the various duties which appertain to our ſtations in life. Theſe things we ſhall feel it incumbent on us habitually to regard: but the queſtion is, How, and in what manner do we perform theſe exerciſes? If our ſouls be in a languiſhing ſtate, they will become a taſk, and not a pleaſure to us; we ſhall be weary of the Lord's ſervice, feel his yoke to be grievous, and while we keep up a round of duty, our devotions will be cold, feeble and unprofitable. But if we be ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, we ſhall count of the return of ſacred opportunities, and find that wiſdom's ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and that all her paths are peace. When David longed for water of the well of Bethlehem, three mighty men brake through the hoſt of the Philiſtines to obtain it, hazarding their lives for his ſake; while men of weaker attachment would have murmured at the ſeverity of ſuch an enterpriſe. If we poſſeſs a warm heart for Chriſt, we ſhall not think much of the time, the talents, the property, the influence which we may devote to his

service; nor count our lives dear to us, if we may but promote his kingdom and glory in the world. This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous. Nor will this pleasure be confined to the public exercises of religion, but will extend to those of a more personal and private nature. It is possible we may feel much animation, and possess much enjoyment in the outward means, while we are cold and lifeless in the duties of retirement; and this will be the case where the religion of the heart is not cultivated, nor close walking with God carefully maintained. But if we be strengthened with might, by his Spirit, in the inner man, communion with God will be earnestly sought after, private duties vigorously attended to, and the closet will yield us pleasure, as well as the tabernacles of the Lord of hosts. There are but few of whom it may be said, as of Caleb and Joshua, that they follow the Lord *fully*. Multitudes of professors appear to be but half-hearted in religion; they neither wholly relinquish it, nor take it up in earnest; but are desirous of following the Lord so far as is consistent with their carnal ease, their worldly interest, or their sinful passions, and no further. But if the object of the apostle's prayer be accomplished in us, we shall be decided for God, and prompt in our manner of serving him; not consulting with flesh and blood, not attempting to accommodate our principles and practice to those of the generality, nor wishing to do as little as possible for God, consistently with our own safety; but delighting to do all his will, we shall run in the way of his commandments.

2. The degree of our spiritual strength may be determined by the manner in which we *resist temptation*.—All men are tempted; but all do not resist temptation: this is peculiar to the christian character. Mere worldly men go with the stream; they walk according to the course of this world, and are hurried along with the impetuous torrent. But if we be christians, we are not of the world, and are in the habit of resisting its temptations. Yet if our resistance be feeble and indeterminate; if we hesitate where we ought to be decided; if we look back on Sodom, like Lot's wife, with a lingering desire after those sinful pleasures which

we profeſs to have given up, and regret the loſs of ſenſual gratifications,—are we not carnal, and walk as men? He who is ſtrengthened with might in the inner man will not pauſe when temptation meets him, nor parley with the tempter; but will readily anſwer, "Thus it is written." It will be ſufficient for him to know that God has forbidden this or that. Like a dutiful child, the will of his father is the guide of his conduct, and that alone will furniſh ſufficient motives for obedience: Thus it is written.

3. The ſpirit in which we *endure affliction* will tend to diſcover the degree of religion we poſſeſs.—Affliction is the lot of man, as well as temptation; and we muſt all get through our difficulties in ſome way or other: but the manner in which we get through them will ſhew whether we be ſtrengthened with might in the inner man, or not. If we faint in the day of adverſity, our ſtrength is ſmall; if we be fretful, and murmur at the hand of God; if we ſink under the burden, and wiſh in ourſelves to die; we either have no religion at all, or poſſeſs it but in a ſmall degree. Great grace would enable us to bear affliction with ſubmiſſion, and even to rejoice in tribulation. Primitive chriſtians were deſtitute, afflicted, tormented; and yet how happy were they with their lot! They took joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods, rejoiced that they were counted worthy to ſuffer for Chriſt's ſake, and counted it all joy when they fell into divers temptations. Out of weakneſs they were made ſtrong, and waxed valiant in fight: thus they were more than conquerors through him that loved them.

4. The ſenſe we entertain of *our own weakneſs* is alſo a criterion of our being ſtrengthened in the inner man.—An apoſtle could ſay, "When I am weak, then am I ſtrong." To a worldly mind this may appear highly paradoxical, but a babe in Chriſt may underſtand it. When we have the greateſt ſenſe of our own inſufficiency for what is good, and feel that we are nothing, and without Chriſt can do nothing, then are we ſtrong in the Lord and in the power of his might. But if we feel ſelf ſufficient, confident, and diſpoſed to lean to our own underſtanding, then are we weak indeed, and become an eaſy prey to the enemy. Peter was never ſo weak as when he thought there was no danger of falling, and boldly

said, "Though all men should forsake thee, yet will not I." Paul was never so strong as when he felt himself to be "nothing." When most sensible of our own insufficiency, we shall pray most for strength from heaven, and watch most against temptation; and by these means we shall be strengthened with strength in our souls.

II. We are led to notice the *desirableness* of the blessing prayed for.—Paul would not have been so importunate in his request, if it had not been of the greatest importance that we should not only be christians indeed, but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But there are other reasons which might be offered.

1. The Scriptures lay much stress on this, as tending to *glorify God*.—"Herein is my Father glorified, (saith Christ) that ye bear *much fruit*: so shall ye be my disciples." Every field will bear some fruit, in the ordinary course of things; but it is to the more abundant honour of the husbandman when his field brings forth thirty, sixty, or a hundred fold. So it is not merely by our being christians, that God is glorified; but by our being eminent christians. Nor is this all: if we be desirous only of so much grace as may carry us safely to heaven, it is doubtful whether we shall ever arrive there at last. Abounding in the fruits of righteousness is considered by our Lord as essential to the very existence of true religion; for, saith he, "*so* shall ye be my disciples." Christ himself brought forth much fruit, and it is necessary that we resemble him.

2. Our *usefulness* depends much on our being strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.—If our souls be in a languishing state, what good can we do in the world? Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing. What good can we do in society, amongst our immediate connexions or in our families, but as we diffuse a savour of Christ? And how can this be done, if we ourselves have lost that savour, and are become lifeless and unfruitful in the ways of God! At the close of every day it becomes us to inquire, Has any one been improved by our conversation? Will any one think the better of Christ, from what they have heard

or seen in us? Or have we been amongst men merely as men of the world; and might they not say of us, What do ye more than others? He who possesses much religion, will impart more or less of it to those about him: he will not make a show of it; yet it must be seen. There is that in the outward mien, the inward temper, and daily conversation of a man of genuine religion, which indicate that he has been with Jesus. The modesty of his countenance, the meekness and cheerfulness of his disposition, the sweet familiarity and seriousness of his intercourse with men, enliven the circle in which he moves, and recommend the religion which he professes.

III. The *encouragement* we have to pray that we may be strengthened with might, by his Spirit in the inner man, is intimated by the phrase, "That he would grant you according to the *riches of his glory, &c.*"—When men are both rich and generous, and willing to give to the necessitous according to their ability, it affords a very powerful motive to solicit their assistance. But who can estimate the riches of God's goodness, and the boundless extent of his grace! And if he gives according to the riches of his glory, what encouragement is here for prayer! Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it, saith the Lord. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. Let us ask much, and we shall have much: The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, and in them that hope in his mercy. He who had but one talent, and went and hid it in the earth, lost it; but he who had five talents, and went and traded with the same, gained five other talents. Men who live to God, and whose whole concern is to promote his glory, shall find their sphere of usefulness enlarging with their activity, and that God is girding them with strength proportioned to their labours. Like their divine Master, their reward is with them, and their work before them. To him that hath, shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away, even that which he hath.

Letter I.

To Mrs. MEAD.

Kettering, Jan. 10, 1801.

My dear Friend,

YOUR heavy affliction, and it seems, approaching diſſolution, have not been forgotten by me; though, through a multiplicity of concerns, I have not been able till now to write. I know it is a ſerious thing to *die;* but I know alſo, that faith in the Son of God will remove mountains.

It was one of the conſolations of our Lord to his ſorrowful diſciples, when about to be taken from them: *I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myſelf; that where I am, there ye may be alſo: and whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.* What can I offer to my dear dying friend more ſuitable than a few remarks upon this intereſting paſſage?

If our Saviour had been going to ſome unknown place, and we muſt not follow him, we might well be unhappy: *but whither I go ye know.* It is true, we know nothing of an hereafter beyond what God in his word hath told us: but thoſe lively oracles are a light in a dark place, whoſe cheering beams pierce the otherwiſe impervious gloom of futurity. When a dying heathen was aſked whither he was going? "O my friends! (ſaid he) we know nothing of an hereafter." Such muſt have been our anſwer, but for the glorious goſpel of the bleſſed God. As it is, we know whither our Redeemer is gone: he is gone to his Father, and to our Father; to his God, and to our God. He is gone to the Mount Sion; to the city of the living God; to the innumerable company of angels; to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect; to God the judge of all. Whither he is gone, we know; for we have had a foretaſte of the bliſs. As believers, we are already come to Mount Sion. The church below and the church above are only different branches of the ſame family; ſo that he who is come to one, is come to the other.

But how are we to follow him, unleſs we *know the way?* If he come and receive us, he will be our guide. And this is not all; *The way we know.* Thomas thought he knew not whither his Lord was going, nor the way that led to him: yet he knew his Lord, and believed in him as the Son of God, and the Saviour of ſinners. Jeſus therefore anſwered, *I am the way, the truth, and the life:* knowing me, you know the way to the heavenly life. Yes, my dear Friend, we not only know *whither* our Saviour is gone, but the *way* that leads to him. The doctrine of the Croſs, as dear PEARCE obſerved, "is the only religion for a dying ſinner."

If an affectionate father had reſolved to remove to a diſtant country, he might not take his wife and children with him the firſt time; but might chooſe to go by himſelf, that he might encounter and remove the chief difficulties in the way, and make ready a habitation to receive them. Such was the conduct of our Saviour. *I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myſelf; that where I am, there ye may be alſo.* His paſſage through the territories of death, was attended with the moſt dreadful of all conflicts; but having overcome, it renders our's an eaſy one. Death to us is—Jeſus *coming to receive us to himſelf.*

The preſence of a beloved object is the grand preparative of any place; and that which gives it its principal charm. Such is his preparation of a place for us. Jeſus is *there;* and that is enough. If any thing will operate as a magnet to attract us from earth to heaven, it is the conſideration of being *where Jeſus ſitteth at the right hand of God.*

If before this reaches you, you have not received your diſcharge, accept my affectionate farewell. We ſhall ſoon meet again; and meet to part no more. May you enjoy a ſafe and comfortable paſſage, and have an entrance miniſtered unto you abundantly into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt!

My ſympathizing remembrance alſo to Mr. Mead, and to your brother and ſiſters. The Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with your ſpirit!

Affectionately your's,

A. F.

Letter II.

To Mr. T. R.

Kettering, Feb. 24, 1801.

My dear Friend,

I DROP you a few lines by Mr. T. to expreſs the ſympathetic feelings of my mind with a family whom I ſincerely reſpect. Doubtleſs you have ſuſtained a loſs in the removal of dear Mrs. Mead; yet there are circumſtances, which if duly conſidered, muſt greatly alleviate it. She might have left a family of helpleſs children. Her life might have been ſuch as to have diſgraced her connexions; and their only relief might have been in endeavouring to forget her. Or, if ſhe had ſuſtained a fair character among men; yet if that had been *all*, you would have ſorrowed as thoſe who have no hope.

As I ſaid to her in the proſpect of death, ſo now I ſay to you: *Whither ſhe is gone ye know; and the way ye know.* It is not to an unknown ſtate, nor where you cannot follow her. You have only to be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promiſes.

Jeſus went to *prepare a place for his followers*. We underſtand how he *prepares us for heaven:* But how does his preſence *prepare heaven for us?* Three ways occur to me:—

Firſt, As conſtituting *the eſſence of its bleſſedneſs*.—Think what an acceſſion of joy his triumphant entrance muſt have occaſioned through all the heavenly regions, and what a ſource of continued enjoyment his preſence affords? What would ſome ſocieties be without certain intereſting characters, which are in a ſort the life of them? And what would heaven be without Chriſt? The zeſt of the heavenly bliſs conſiſts in its being the place where *Chriſt ſitteth at the right hand of God.* This is urged, and well it might be, as the grand motive to *ſet our affections on things above.*

Secondly, *As gathering together the whole family of heaven and earth.*—This redemption brings many multitudes to

glory, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and every one that enters adds to the enjoyment. In order to connect us together in the closest bonds of affection, God has so ordered it, that both in this world and that which is to come, our blessedness should be bound up with that of each other; in seeing the good of his chosen, rejoicing in the gladness of his nation, and glorying with his inheritance. Hence it follows, that every accession to the heavenly world affords an influx to the enjoyment of its inhabitants. Every one that goes before may be said to contribute to the preparing of the place for them which follow after. The pure river of the water of life has its origin in the throne of God, and the Lamb; but in its progress it passes through various mediums, which swell its streams, and render it more and more delectable. From the entrance of Abel into the New Jerusalem, to this day, it has been rising higher and higher, and will continue to do so till all the nations of the saved are collected together.

Thirdly, *As superintending the concerns of the universe, and causing all events to work together and produce a great and ultimate good.*—Glory awaits the righteous immediately upon their departure from the body; but a much greater glory is in reserve. Innumerable events in the system of providence must remain inexplicable, till the mystery of God be finished. It is impossible for spectators to comprehend the use of all the parts of a complicate machine, till it is constructed and put into motion. And as our Forerunner is now preparing the scenery of this grand exhibition, and hastening it to its desired issue, it is thus that he is preparing a place for us.

From hence we are encouraged to be looking for, and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, and directed to consider it as the period when we shall be fully *satisfied*. How solemn, and yet how sweet, is the description of it. *The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.* A *shout*, methinks, denotes the universal joy of heaven for the arrival of the day when the war is terminated in victory, and the last enemy is destroyed. The blowing of a *trumpet*, may probably allude to that of jubilee, on which the prison

doors were thrown open, and the captives set at liberty. Such were the consolations presented to the Thessalonians on the death of their christian friends.

Our Lord did not absolutely forbid his apostles to weep at his departure: he himself *wept* at the grave of Lazarus; but he dissuaded them from *excessive* grief—Let not not your heart be troubled. I think that I never felt what may be called *heart trouble*, or *deep* distress, for the loss of any person, however near to me, whose death I considered merely as a removal to the church above. The words of our Saviour are here applicable: *If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I go to the Father; for my Father is greater than I.* That is, the glory I go to possess with my Father is greater than any thing I could inherit upon earth; and therefore, if ye loved me, and your love operated in a proper way, you would rather be glad for my sake, than sorry for your own.

Present our kind and sympathizing regards to Mr. M. and all the family, and accept the same yourself, from

Your's affectionately,

A. F.

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